DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 427 422 EA 029 661

TITLE	Democratic Governance of Public Schooling in South Africa: A Record of Research and Advocacy from the Education Policy Unit (Natal).
INSTITUTION	Natal Univ., Durban (South Africa). Education Policy Unit.
ISBN	ISBN-1-86840-288-6
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	198p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Education Policy Unit, University of Natal, Durban 4041, South Africa ($17 plus shipping and handling).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Democratic Values; *Educational Change; Educational Finance; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Governing Boards; Models; *Public Education
IDENTIFIERS	African National Congress; *South Africa (Natal)

ABSTRACT

The birth of the Educational Policy Units (EPUs) in South Africa can be traced to the intensification of mass struggles against apartheid between 1984 and 1986. This text is a compilation of the works that appeared during the first decade of the Natal EPU. It is divided into 4 sections. Section 1 describes the context of the development of the EPU and contains the following essays: "'Children of War': The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling in Natal" (B. Nzimande and S. Thusi); "School Ownership in South Africa" (J. Pampallis); and "People's Education for People's Power" (B. Soobrayan). Section 2 looks at the role of parent-teacher-student associations (PTSAs) in the emerging democratic society. Essays in this section include: "Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs): Present State and Future Prospects" (S. Sithole); "The Relationship between PTAs/PTSAs and the State (T. Dlamini and B. Nzimande); and "'Civil Society' and the Role of the National Education Coordinating Committee" (B. Nzimande). Section 3 details the unfolding of a democratic governance debate and includes the following essays: "Towards a New Structure for the Governance of Schooling" (B. Nzimande, J. Pampallis, T. Dlamini, L. Ntuli, and M. Berger); "Restructuring the Education System: Debates and Conflicts" (J. Pampallis); "The Participation of Students in Democratic School Governance" (S. Sithole); "Restructuring Educational Governance at Sub-national Levels in South Africa" (J. Karlsson, J. Pampallis, and S. Sithole); and "The Role of Governance Structures in the Sustainability of Learning Spaces" (J. Karlsson and J. Pampalis). The last section examines the new context and features the following essays: "Racial Integration of Public Schools in South Africa: A Study of Practices, Attitudes and Trends (J. Naidoo); Local Government Partnership with Public Schools in South Africa: Some Stakeholder Perceptions" (L. Jita and J. Karlsson); and "Decentralisation in the New Education System: Governance and Funding of Schooling in South Africa 1992-1997" (J. Panpallis) (Contains an index.) (RJM)

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DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICA

A RECORD OF
RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY
FROM THE
EDUCATION POLICY UNIT (NATAL)

Education Policy Unit (Natal)
1998

Published by
Education Policy Unit (Natal)
University of Natal
Durban 4041
South Africa

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ISBN 1-86840-288-6

Set in 10 on 13 pt Monotype Bembo.
Designed & produced by Graphicos.

Cover: Morning assembly at a rural school near Greytown—June 1990.
Photo: Rafs Mayet.

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Acknowlegements

The seed that the idea for this book grew from was planted in early 1997 during a conversation between Blade Nzimande and Jenni Karlsson while motoring along De Waal Drive into a windswept Cape Town. In bouncing around suggestions of ways in which to mark the Natal EPU's first decade, Blade, a former director of the Unit, proposed publishing a compilation of our work written over the years. During the year the idea grew and was nurtured by the editorial committee comprising Margie Ramsay, Ian Mkhize, Loyiso Jita and Jenni Karlsson. This group sharpened the initial conceptualisation through careful consideration, selection and grouping of material. Especially, we thank Margie Ramsay who edited the papers, replanting them according to the wishes of the editorial committee and who grafted on the selected photographs and fresh bits and pieces. Many long hours were spent chasing stray items, at times with the assistance of our librarian, Rheena Hansraj.

While EPU holds the copyright to most of the papers, the commissioned paper by Sibusiso Sithole is printed with the permission of the national Department of Education. Omar Badsha, Rafs Mayet, Guy Tillim and Paul Weinberg have allowed us to use their photographs.

This book would not have been possible without the support of our funders, Interfund (Ibis/Danida Frame Programme) and the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA). Through their assistance we were able to bring in Maria Criticos, whose eye for design and style adds that special touch to the publication.

Foreword

This book marks the first ten years of the Education Policy Unit at the University of Natal.

The Education Policy Unit came into being at the University of Natal as a partnership between the University and National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) some ten years ago. Sandy Lazarus was coordinator of the Unit until the first director, Dr Blade Nzimande, was seconded to this important role from an establishment post in the Department of Psychology. Under his direction and leadership, the EPU embarked on a series of important projects which it was hoped would impact positively on the education crisis that prevailed at the time. This was indeed the case.

When in 1994 Dr Nzimande left the University to play a more active role in the political arena, the leadership of the EPU was ably assumed by John Pampallis who was at the time senior researcher in the unit and well versed in its work and philosophy. He ensured that, in the run-up to the first democratic elections, the EPU concentrated its efforts on developing and shaping new policy options, both regionally and nationally. This period in the history of the EPU was also characterised by a greater integration of the work of the Unit with the formal structures of this University. John Pampallis contributed very greatly to the formulation of a new paradigm for the association of externally funded units such as the EPU, with the University. Indeed, in this period the EPU began to impact positively on curriculum reform and research within the University. Pampallis' book, *Foundations of the New South Africa*, was awarded the University Book Prize in the category of Humanities. This was the first time

that a work by a member of the non-establishment teaching staff of the university received this honour. This book is an indication of the breadth and potential contribution of the Unit's work.

The period shortly before John Pampallis left the EPU coincided with major changes in the funding environment, and in the regional and national expectations made of NGOs in South Africa. At the present time, the EPU is heavily involved in both funded research and an increasingly wide spectrum of consultancies. The third director, Jenni Karlsson, has the challenge of forging a new kind of relationship with the University while continuing the tradition built up by her predecessors. The EPU will continue to undertake both research and advocacy work in order to contribute to the resolution of the education crisis facing this province and the country.

As in the past, the University of Natal supports the work of the EPU, and the direction that the Unit is taking. We hope that despite moving to achieve the status of a Section 21 Company, the EPU will continue to be increasingly integrated into the life and concerns of the School of Education and of the University as a whole.

PROF ELEANOR PRESTON-WHYTE
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT)

PROF AHMED BAWA
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)

Introduction

The birth of the EPUs in general, and the Natal EPU in particular, can be directly traced to the intensification of mass struggles against apartheid between 1984 and 1986. These semi-insurrectionary struggles, of which education struggles were a key component, made a major contribution to the changing balance of forces between the broad liberation movement and the apartheid regime. Unlike the 1976 student uprisings, which were largely spontaneous, the 1984–86 semi-insurrectionary struggles were so extensive and widespread that they seriously weakened the capacity of the apartheid regime to continue ruling solely in the old repressive ways. These struggles were also taking place at a time when the apartheid ruling order was widely isolated internationally. Organised resistance and mass formations had grown considerably in strength inside the country. The ANC had gained massive support inside the country despite the fact that it still remained banned until 1990. Increasingly the ANC and its allies were seen as the only legitimate representatives of the aspirations of the majority of the people of South Africa.

In the education sphere in particular, the mid-1980s were marked by significant if not dramatic political developments. Firstly, the intensification of education struggles had led to the formation of the Soweto Parents Consultative Committee (SPCC) – an umbrella body representing parents, students, teachers and communities in the education arena. This development was immediately followed by the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), later to become the National Education Coordinating Committee. The formation of the NECC was a milestone not only in the history of the struggles against apartheid education but also in the totality of the struggles against the entire apartheid political and social order.

From Student Leadership (1976) to Community Leadership (1986)

In discussing the immediate context within which the Natal EPU and the other EPUs were formed, it is important to understand the evolution of the struggles of the democratic movement in general, and the education struggles in particular, between 1976 and 1986, the year of the formation of the NECC. The 1976 student uprisings were more or less a spontaneous revolt by students against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in African schools by the National Party's apartheid regime. However, this spontaneous uprising was set against the background of the massive 1973 workers' strikes which rekindled mass resistance in South Africa, though largely limited to the workplace. The 1973 workers' uprisings had provided a spark to the rebuilding of the democratic labour movement, and consequently laid a firm foundation for the rebuilding of mass organisation against the apartheid regime. The 1976 students' uprisings were largely initiated, led and limited to students with very minimal participation by the broad community of the black oppressed in the country. There was no direct relationship between the fledgling labour movement and these students' uprisings.

The 1976 student uprisings were also not backed up by any extensive organisation in education, other than the black consciousness organisations that were relatively small and weak, found in pockets of urban areas in South Africa. Whilst these struggles quickly spread, in the late 1970s, to various parts of the country – from their original locus in Soweto and other townships in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal region (now Gauteng) – there was still no broader community involvement and they were almost entirely led by the students.

However there were other developments after the 1976 student uprisings that were to contribute significantly to the broadening of education struggles beyond just the students and the school or university sectors. The formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979 contributed to a new political climate in South Africa. This was buttressed by the official recognition (no matter how partial and restricted) of independent and democratic trade unions representing African workers by the apartheid regime. The formation of FOSATU allowed for a certain degree of semi-legal mass activity against apartheid, despite the fact that these unions were severely restricted in terms of involvement in broader political struggles against apartheid.

In the same year, 1979, a nationwide student formation of high school students, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), was formed. The formation of COSAS deepened the education struggles in the school sector, and was able to give leadership to the struggles that had erupted since 1976. However, it was during the early to mid-1980s that a firm foundation was laid, not only for broad-based education struggles, but for anti-apartheid struggles in general. The most significant event in the early 1980s was the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August 1983. The UDF brought together scores of regional and national anti-apartheid formations into the largest single, legal front to oppose the apartheid regime since the banning of the liberation movement in 1960. The single most important aspect of the formation of the UDF was the fact that it gave political organisational expression and cohesion to a range of struggles against apartheid, from civic, labour, local, youth, to educational struggles. Another important aspect about the formation of the UDF was that it united youth and broader community struggles, thus bringing into the post-1976 political developments in South Africa, the missing adult and parent component.

The Alliance forged between the UDF and FOSATU, and later the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also united labour and broader community struggles in a common front against apartheid. The first concrete expression of this alliance was the September 1984 general strike spearheaded by both the UDF and FOSATU. It was this strike that was to be the spark for the semi-insurrectionary struggles of the ensuing two to three years.

Other significant developments that took place between 1976 and 1986 were the apartheid regime's consolidation and implementation of its bantustan programme, as well as the establishment of the tricameral parliament in 1983. Between 1976 and 1986 the apartheid regime had granted so-called 'independence' to four bantustans, as well as 'self-determination' to a number of other bantustans, including the KwaZulu bantustan. As part of this programme, education departments were created in each of the bantustans; thus delegating the running of ethnically based bantu education into the hands of those at the helm of the bantustans' political regimes. This development, instead of resolving the education crisis, created new crisis points and arenas of struggle on the education front, as these bantustans were incapable of providing decent education for the people under their jurisdiction.

The formation of the NECC in 1986 marked a qualitative development and

a culmination of ten years of struggle in the education arena, a vast improvement on the state of educational organisation in 1976. The NECC, by bringing together the various social actors in the education arena, provided a new vehicle for education struggles. Much more importantly, this development brought into the education struggles communities, parents and adults in general – an important development since 1976. This development and its importance was aptly captured by Zwelakhe Sisulu in his address to the first conference of the NECC in Durban in 1986 thus:

> The NECC has opened the way for people's power to be developed in our struggle for a free, democratic, compulsory and non-racial education. The crisis committees have brought all sectors of the community together in the pursuit of this noble goal. Students, parents and teachers now have democratic organisations available through which we have begun to take some control over education. *They provide the vehicles through which divisions between young and old, teachers and parents can be overcome.* Not only this, but our democratic crisis committees can, and must, be used to help tackle all the problems which we face, to develop and deepen people's power in the townships and in the schools. *The education struggle is a political struggle in South Africa.* (Sisulu, 1986, in *Transformation*, 1:107 – emphases added).

This statement captures the two most important differences between the situation in 1976 and its immediate aftermath, and the level of development of education struggles in and around 1986. Firstly, fairly advanced organisational vehicles had been developed to take education struggles forward and, much more importantly, this organisational maturity was expressed in uniting young and old, students and teachers, children and parents. Secondly, there was a much more advanced theoretical and concrete understanding of the relationship between educational struggles and the broader political struggles against apartheid. It was these developments that laid the basis for the development of the concept of 'People's education for people's power'. It was this theoretical framework, concept and slogan that laid the basis for the formation of the EPUs in the mid-to-late 1980s. But how did this happen?

People's Education for People's Power and Counter-Hegemonic Education Policies

The slogan 'People's education for people's power' was developed to capture not only the stage of development of education struggles in South Africa, but

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also the location of these struggles in the broader national liberation struggle. The struggle for people's education and its aims are also best captured by Sisulu in the same speech made in 1996:

> What do we mean when we say we want people's education? We are agreed that we don't want Bantu education but we must be clear about what we want in its place. We must also be clear as to how we are going to achieve this. We are no longer demanding the same education as whites, since this is only education for domination. People's education means education at the service of the people as a whole, education that liberates, education that puts the people in command of their lives. We are not prepared to accept any 'alternative' to Bantu education that is imposed from above... Another type of 'alternative school' we reject is the one that gives students from a more wealthy background avenues to opt out of the struggle, such as commercially run schools that are springing up... To be acceptable, every initiative must come from the people themselves, must be accountable to the people... When we fight for and achieve democratic SRCs and parents committees, we are starting to realise our demands that the People Shall Govern and that the Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened (ibid, pp.110–111).

This statement put, in the most succinct terms to date then, what people's education was about. However, at the same time the statement captures the lack of detail as to what people's education would mean. Whilst there was clarity about the need to establish democratic and participative structures of governance, it was virtually silent on curriculum questions beyond the generalities of 'education for democracy and empowerment'. It was this type of thinking, together with the changing balance of forces on the ground, that led to the NECC, in 1986, embarking on negotiations with the Universities of Natal and Witwatersrand to establish research units supporting people's education – the Education Policy Units.

The formation of the EPUs was, of course, taking place against the background of a wealth of experience of local and national struggles around the formation of alternative school governing bodies – the Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs), which in many schools had effectively replaced the apartheid state's toothless school committees. In a way research support for the struggles for people's education was already going to be informed by this wealth of experience from concrete struggles. But beyond the vision of a different education system there were no concrete policy alternatives to apartheid

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education. It was this gap that the NECC was trying to fill by initiating the formation of the EPUs.

What Kind of Policy? The Years 1987–89

At the formation of the Natal EPU in 1987 a critical question that had to be answered was what kind of research work or policy analysis was to be undertaken by the unit. During the first two to three years of its existence, the Natal EPU grappled with the question of whether to act as a strictly service organisation to the NECC or to develop a macro-policy framework with alternatives to bantu and apartheid education. The former approach, informed more by the activism of the NECC, meant that the EPU had to provide for the immediate informational needs of local educational organisations. The latter meant boldly proposing a new alternative policy framework informed by the vision of people's education. In a way, the two cannot be totally separated, yet in practice, for the researchers in the EPUs at that time, there was a very real difference. For instance, in the early days of the Natal EPU we were grappling with the question of what type of people to recruit into the unit. Were we to recruit educational activists whose role would be to provide immediate informational backup to struggles on the ground, or were we to recruit academics and qualified researchers who would undertake longer-term policy research? In a way this was a debate that was not resolved within the EPU until after the unbanning of the liberation movement and the beginning of negotiations.

Related to the above question was whether our methodology was going to be a micro or macro approach. In the heat of the immediacy of the education struggles in the mid-1980s there was also a negative attitude towards anything thing that was not related to 'concrete and immediate struggles on the ground'. Therefore the tendency was to despise macro-policy and research work, and focus on producing micro educational data, statistics and trends to inform day to day struggles. This was also partly the result of lack of experience within the broad democratic movement on policy research. We were all emerging from a discourse of critique of apartheid, where alternatives were more implied than explicitly spelt out, except in very general terms of building 'people's education for people's power' and the establishment of non-racial, non-sexist and equal education.

The Natal EPU's approach to our task was also informed by the effects of political and counter-revolutionary violence on every aspect of life in the Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) province, not least its effect on schooling and education broadly. Our context was much more informed by the reality of having to support struggles concerning the authority that controlled education, whether it was the KwaZulu bantustan or Pretoria's Department of Education and Training (DET). To outsiders this choice might have looked insignificant, as both these departments were apartheid structures, but the reality was that schools under the KwaZulu bantustan were infinitely worse than those controlled by the DET. What also made a difference was the extent to which the schools in the KwaZulu bantustan had themselves become sites for violence and instruments of patronage used by the bantustan bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie to dispense favours to its supporters or to punish those opposed to its rule.

The question of what kind of research should be undertaken was also informed by the fact that policy research in education was largely an arena of intellectuals, scholars and researchers working with the apartheid regime in one way or an other. It was a completely new experience for most of us, who had been drawn from the ranks of the democratic movement. The dominant concepts and paradigm for educational policy research in South Africa were largely conservative. International methodology and comparative studies on educational policy research in developing countries were, on the whole, also not very helpful as many of these were informed by the structural adjustment or neo-colonial policy paradigms, particularly in relation to developing countries. In a way, the EPUs were placed in the unique historical position of having to forge a paradigm inspired by our own critique of apartheid education, rooted in and inspired by the political practice and theory of people's education for people's power. It was, in short, a trailblazing task. With hindsight, the imperative to relate our research work to ongoing political struggles against apartheid became one of the major strengths of the EPUs.

The very early documents and research work produced by the Natal EPU between 1987 and 1989 reflect its focus and pre-occupation with immediate support to the democratic movement as opposed to longer-term macro policy issues. It was within this context that the University of Natal's Education Monitor – a simplified education data leaflet – was produced for circulation amongst the structures of the democratic movement operating in education.

The Monitor was later to prove a valuable means of communicating complex policy issues to the broader constituency of the democratic movement in simplified language, including editions written in IsiZulu. Much as it was informed by the early paradigm of the EPU, it was later used as an instrument to simplify extensive research work and translate it into language understandable to the broad layer of activists in the democratic movement.

From Critique to an Alternative Policy Research Paradigm: the NEPI Process

The deepening crisis facing the apartheid regime in the late 1980s was accompanied by growing confidence and political sophistication of the mass democratic movement and the national liberation movement as a whole. There was an atmosphere of political optimism that the days of the apartheid regime were numbered. This created a completely new climate where there was growing internal pressure and imperative within the democratic movement to develop alternative (detailed) policies on a whole range of fronts, not least in education. It was because of this that the NECC initiated what will perhaps go down as the boldest policy exercise by the democratic movement in education, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). This initiative also informed, though was not limited to, the ANC's own policy initiatives in late 1986. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) was an initiative of the NECC to begin to develop policy options in education, from amongst which a possible future democratic government could develop a non-racial and democratic set of education policies.

Understandably, bold as the NEPI process was, it still limited itself to policy options instead of firm policy proposals. The reason for this was the uncertainty and fluidity of the political situation in the late 1980s into the early 1990s, although it was clear that the apartheid regime was on its way out. The NEPI process, however, provided a completely new environment for the EPUs. Though the EPUs were at the centre of the process, this exercise deliberately brought together scores of educational academics and researchers located mainly in universities, and secondarily in NGOs.

The NEPI process began to provide a focus for the EPUs and the need for specialisation both within and between them became urgent. It was important for the EPUs to specialise in order to develop capacity in a whole range of areas in educational policy research. The NEPI process also marked a paradigm shift

from critique of apartheid education and its policies to experimenting with concrete policy options for a democratic South Africa. Both the NEPI process and the unbanning of the liberation movement were milestones in education policy research within the democratic and broader liberation movements.

Perhaps the most important theoretical and methodological contribution and clarification that the NEPI process brought about was the conceptual understanding of the relationship and distinction between policy analysis and broader educational research. The NEPI process and its internal debates led us to what was perhaps our most important 'discovery' at the time; that there was a difference between educational research and policy analysis. Research was a tool that had to be used, amongst others, in identifying and developing policy options. Policy options, on the other hand, were possible available paths or choices to be followed in transforming education, given both the objective and subjective conditions in the broader balance of political forces at a given conjuncture. Of course these policy choices were informed by a broader vision of a democratic, unified, non-racial and non-sexist education system. But at the same time research tools and skills were indispensable in policy analysis. If this understanding does not reflect that of all those involved in the NEPI process, then at least this was my understanding and insight gained from the process, which was to inform my directorship of the Natal EPU between August 1989 and April 1994.

The Natal EPU and Governance in Education

It is difficult to recount exactly the immediate circumstances that led to the Natal EPU specialising in the area of school governance. This choice was informed largely by broader political developments, both in the educational arena as well as in the broader struggle for national liberation. The first important factor that influenced the Natal EPU to choose the area of school governance as its primary focus for research and policy analysis was the fact that the NECC had placed major emphasis on the area of governance. In fact, the core of the struggles for educational transformation in the 1980s was in the area of democratic governance. The discourse and political concept of 'people's education for people's power' placed heavy emphasis on democratic and participatory governance structures in education. The first major victories in educational struggles under apartheid were in the area of school governance, with the establishment of PTSAs. Democratic structures of school governance – PTSAs,

SRCs and democratic parents committees – were already widely established as alternatives to apartheid structures in the mid to late 1980s.

The second factor that influenced the choice of school governance as the focus for the Natal EPU was the immediate contestation over the control of schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The apartheid regime handed over thousands of African schools to the KwaZulu bantustan government during the course of its existence. The only weapon that many communities had to fight against the incorporation of African schools by the KwaZulu government was the democratically elected, but unofficial governance and community education structures. Not only were such structures used to fight against incorporation, but they were also used to create space for democratic control even where the battle had been won to keep as many schools as possible under the Pretoria-controlled DET. Coupled with the violence that engulfed the province the issue of school governance became even more central to education struggles in Natal.

With the establishment of more EPUs in the 1990s – at UWC, UDW and Fort Hare – there was also a need to rationalise the work of the EPUs so as to make maximum contribution to the development of alternative education policies. This gave further impetus to the division of labour, with the Natal EPU already strengthening its focus on the area of school governance. The establishment of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) in 1992 as the focus for educational policy research and development for the ANC also marked another milestone in the development of progressive educational policy work in our country. The very close relationship between the CEPD and the ANC provided the much-needed overall political direction for educational policy work. This was also taking place in the context of constitutional negotiations and the urgency to develop policies for a new democratic government.

It is indeed no exaggeration that the contribution of the Natal EPU in the area of school governance in particular, and educational governance in general, has informed the policies of the first ever democratic government in our country. It was in the Natal EPU that the question of structures of school governance was researched, discussed and developed. It was for this reason that the immediate past director of the Natal EPU, John Pampallis – my successor and now director of the CEPD – was appointed by the Minister of Education to the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools. It was this investigation that formed the basis of the Government's Second White Paper, whose focus was the transformation of schooling in South

Africa. This White Paper became the basis for the historic South African Schools Act, 1996 that, for the first time, created a completely new legal framework for schooling in our country. It consigned to the dustbin of history the existence of racially and ethnically based schools in South Africa and instead, created a new legislative framework for a non-racial, non-sexist and equitable public schooling system.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Natal EPU continues to engage this critical educational focus. Thus, in 1997, in the year of its 10th anniversary, Natal EPU investigated and monitored the first elections for democratic school governing bodies in public schools. Despite encouraging signs of these structures in schools throughout KwaZulu-Natal, Natal EPU observes that the struggle for transformed educational governance has shifted to focus on the expertise and capacity needed by local school communities to govern and direct their institutions. Furthermore, following the passing of the South African Schools Act, 1996, Natal EPU is collaborating with several education organisations within civil society to establish a national association for school governing bodies. This intervention promises to forge a powerful instrument that will build the capacity of governing bodies and provide a single platform from which school communities that were previously disadvantaged, ignored and neglected can address government about their needs and concerns.

The articles contained in this book are therefore of immense historical value. In a way, they trace the development of the current government's policies on schooling. The articles and research work done by the Natal EPU in the area of governance have been selected to give the reader an insight into the research and policy débates that have come to inform the democratic governance of schooling in our country. Many of the articles reflect the South African people's struggles for educational transformation. Not only is the book of historical value, but it also provides a basis within which current educational policies can be contextualised and evaluated. In other words, it is also a book for the future. It provides a paradigm within which future generations can come to grasp the history of education in South Africa as well as tools with which to further develop and refine policies for educational transformation.

DR BLADE NZIMANDE MP

CHAIRPERSON OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

1 THE CONTEXT

Funeral of United Democratic Front activist, KwaMashu – 1991. Photo: Guy Tillim.

The following papers set the scene for the work that EPU would be involved in over the next few years. The first, an edited extract from 'Children of War', examines the impact of violence on education, particularly schooling, in the province of Natal. In the second paper, the landscape of school ownership and control is scanned, while the paper on 'people's education for people's power' echoes the demands of mass-based organisations for equity.

'Children of War' The Impact of Political Violence on Schooling in Natal

BLADE NZIMANDE AND SANDILE THUSI
1991

The violence in Natal[1] was described by some observers as the most devastating social and political upheaval since the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906. Endless killings, burnings, kidnappings, disappearances, displacements, detentions and shootings marked life for entire communities; the list seems endless.

The violence did not simply wreck African communities but was also felt by big business as it was largely working class communities that were devastated. Apart from the economic costs of the high rates of absenteeism, deaths and labour turnover, the 2 July 1990 national stayaway to protest the continuing killings, for example, is estimated to have cost the South African economy about 500 million Rand.

However, the most depressing development of this violence was its spread to the PWV region[2], despite the National Peace Accord signed on 14 September 1991. Nzimande and Thusi argue here that, apart from the deaths and the destruction of human lives and property, the most devastating impact of this war in Natal was on education, particularly schooling. The fundamental aim of this study was to assess the extent to which the violence affected the schooling of African students in Natal.

An Overview of the Education Crisis in South Africa

Before one can fully understand the education crisis in Natal, it is important to briefly outline the crisis nationally. The roots of the present education crisis in South Africa go back to the victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948. Soon after its electoral victory the Nationalist Party set out to effect an all-round restruc-

1 In 1994 the province of Natal was merged with the former KwaZulu bantustan to form KwaZulu-Natal.

2 This region is now part of the province of Gauteng.

turing that was to tightly control the lives of black, and particularly African people, both in urban and rural areas. It was within this context that Bantu Education was introduced in 1955.

Through the Bantu Education system, Africans were to be given just enough education to become unskilled and, at best, semi-skilled workers in the burgeoning economy of South Africa in the World War II period. In practice, this entailed that education for Africans was to be controlled by the apartheid regime itself, with the African communities having no say whatsoever about what was to be taught and how. It also entailed minimal state expenditure on African education, while introducing free and compulsory education for whites. With the introduction of the so-called 'homelands' in the early 1960s the apartheid regime further abrogated its responsibility to provide decent and equal education to Africans by gradually handing over the control of education to its own surrogates in the bantustans.

The introduction of Bantu Education marked the beginning of intense struggles by the oppressed people for control over their education, and for one education system for all the people of South Africa. The dissatisfaction with Bantu Education, which also saw the restructuring of universities and their 'racial and ethnic purification' in the 1960s, continued to fuel boycotts and strikes (albeit weak and easily crushed by the authorities) in black universities throughout the 1960s. It was not until 1976 that the simmering pot of apartheid education exploded with the Soweto and countrywide student uprisings. By this time the racial divisions within South African education had been 'perfected'. The 1976 student uprisings were a watershed in the history of South Africa as a whole and particularly for education struggles.

By 1976 there were primarily two characteristics of apartheid education. The first was racial inequality, characterised in African education by massive shortfalls in educational facilities. This backlog was particularly sharpened in the 1970s by the boom in the number of African secondary school students, for which the existing schools could not cater. The second was an ironical one: the mental subjugation and deprivation of African students through Bantu Education had produced a generation of highly politicised and militant black students who were not only the products of the black secondary schools but were also, significantly, the first generation of students to come out of the now segregated and highly authoritarian black universities. These explosions rocked not only the urban areas but also the bantustans. The bantustans, although they

controlled their own education departments, not only failed to improve the education system in their territories, but the conditions of schooling there became even worse than in the urban areas. These were to be the key elements of the education crisis in South Africa.

Education and the Origins of the Crisis in the KwaZulu Bantustan

At the beginning of 1977, a matter of months after the 1976 student uprisings, education in KwaZulu was handed over to the KwaZulu government. This heralded the formation of the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (DEC). The KwaZulu bantustan has the largest population concentration and is one of the most backward bantustans in terms of education provision. For instance, of all the bantustans, it has the second highest teacher-pupil ratio and the biggest shortage of classrooms (SAIRR, 1989/90). About 90% of African education in Natal is controlled by the DEC. This situation gives the KwaZulu government enormous power and influence in matters of African education in the region. However, instead of using its control to improve the standard of education in KwaZulu, in 1978 the KwaZulu government decided to introduce an Inkatha[3] syllabus throughout the schools under its jurisdiction, thereby turning education into an instrument for propagating the ideas of Inkatha.

Inkatha's syllabus, called Ubuntu-Botho, was made compulsory as a non-examinable subject in all KwaZulu schools in 1979. The syllabus for this subject was drawn up by the Natal African Teachers Union (NATU) – an Inkatha affiliate – together with the School Inspectors' Association of KwaZulu and some Inkatha-supporting academics from the University of Zululand (Mdluli, 1987). There were two main aims in introducing this subject: to create unified ideas to match with the goals of Inkatha (Mdluli, 1987:65) and to facilitate the creation of Inkatha Youth Brigade branches in all schools and deal with those school principals and teachers who opposed the establishment of such branches at school level.

It was clear from as early as 1978 that education was being used to propagate party-political views, a situation similar to the introduction of the Broederbond-designed Christian National Education by the apartheid regime. Inkatha was thus using education as an instrument to deal with opposing organisations

3 A national cultural liberation movement espousing Zulu nationalism that later emerged as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

and views, and to implant the seeds of conflict in education in KwaZulu.

In response to student boycotts in KwaMashu near Durban in 1980, where students were protesting against the Bantu Education system and demanding fundamental changes to the system, vigilantes sympathetic to Inkatha were mobilised to attack students, and forced them to go back to school on the grounds that they were a disgrace to the Zulu nation and did not want to listen to their parents (DEC, 1989:68–69). By posing the problem in this way, Inkatha was ignoring genuine student demands and educational problems in KwaZulu, thereby defending apartheid education.

The KwaZulu Bantustan and the Current Crisis in Education

In order to contextualise the effects of the violence on education in Natal, it is necessary to look at its origins and character.[4] Although violent actions in Natal between Inkatha and the mass democratic movement started soon after the formation of Inkatha, it was not until 1985 that the violence took the form of a sustained war.

Since its formation in 1975, Inkatha has been faced with a major contradiction: that of characterising itself as a liberation movement while, at the same time, functioning within apartheid structures. This contradiction has sharpened over the years as Inkatha has used these same apartheid structures to strengthen its own political position. For the first five years of its existence, many people believed that Inkatha was a continuation of the ANC. However, when it parted ways with the ANC in 1979 after a bitter meeting between Tambo and Buthelezi in London, it could no longer sustain this contradiction. The growth of progressive organisations that continued the ANC tradition in the early 1980s finally exposed Inkatha as something else.

The net outcome of trying to reconcile the two was that Inkatha became more dependent on the apparatus of the apartheid state to maintain its influence in the light of the resurgence of, particularly, the ANC-aligned mass organisations. The intensification of mass struggles and the organisation of various sectors in the community – youth, students, women and workers – provided formidable opposition to the apartheid regime in the 1980s. As a result, Inkatha is caught in a vicious circle whereby as anti-apartheid struggles intensify it becomes more dependent on the apartheid machinery for survival, and as it

4 A large part of this analysis on the violence is taken from Gwala, 1989.

becomes more dependent on these structures it is increasingly set against anti-apartheid organisations. This is the crux of the violence in the Natal region.

It is even more important to understand that Inkatha has become a means through which the apartheid regime can wage its campaign to weaken the national liberation movement and the forces of democracy. The violence in Natal – which to all intents and purposes is an apartheid war against the people, aimed at destabilising the democratic forces – has found an important ally in Inkatha. The state can project the violence as black-on-black ethnic violence and Inkatha finds the support of the apartheid regime a useful tool to catapult it onto the national political scene.

It is in the above context that education has effectively become an instrument of war in Natal. Inkatha uses a combination of patronage and violence to assert its political influence in the region. This also characterises education in the area. In fact, the education crisis cannot be separated from the violence, although it does have its own characteristics that are rooted in the general education crisis in the country.[5]

An Abbreviated Summary of the Findings

This study sampled 244 standard 9 and 10 students drawn from the major metropolitan areas and towns in Natal. The sample is biased towards the urban areas because we selected areas where the war started and has been most intense. We were unable to obtain official statistics on how many students have been killed in the violence in Natal. However, in response to the question on whether any of their school mates had been killed in the violence, 84% of the students answered in the affirmative. This gives some indication of the extent to which school-going children in Natal's African townships are haunted by the spectre of death. The extent to which schools are caught up in the violence and the resultant psychological trauma many students experience is evident from the following comments:

> In my very class there is a desk that has been empty for the past three months or so, despite the fact that we share desks in our class because of overcrowd-

5 In order to properly understand the devastating combination of Inkatha control over KwaZulu, violence, and the collapse of education in the region, it is important to discuss these at the various levels at which they happen, viz. the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, school circuits, and at a school and community level. This is covered in the original report from which this extract is taken.

> ing. That desk used to seat one of my classmates who was ... hacked to death by Inkatha just outside the schoolyard. Every one of us is afraid to occupy that desk because you don't want to feel like you are going to be the next one on the line.

A student activist's account of his life in the aftermath of the death of a comrade who was shot by vigilantes:

> He died in my very own hands before I could get him transport to the hospital. We both served on the SRC with him. Since then I have had to arrive at school either very early or late. ... Sometimes I leave school together with other students, but make sure that I travel inside a bigger group. I change these methods all the time. That is how I have afforded to be still attending school up to now.

A significant fact to emerge from this study is that 22,38% of students killed in the violence died on school premises or in the immediate vicinity of the school. They have become easy targets because they are known to congregate at schools at certain hours of the day. Many of them have been forced to leave school because of the violence and this seems to be corroborated by statistics of the KwaZulu Department of Education which indicated a drop in enrolment figures for secondary schools from 27 000 in 1986 to 25 000 in 1987 (DEC Annual Report).

The findings of this study revealed a high level of disruption in African schools. Of the total sample, 76,23% have experienced closure of schools outside normal school holidays. What is particularly striking is the fact that more than a third (35,24%) of the sample have experienced closure of school for a period of a month or more. In 24,3% of cases the reason given was political violence. In 22,3% of cases the reason for the closure was attacks on students and schools by Inkatha. Attacks by security forces accounted for 10,5% of closures, a significant statistic because it shows the extent to which the police are operating as agents of destabilisation rather than forces of law and order. The three specific forces that were mentioned (and frequently reported by the students to be acting in concert) were the ZPs, the South African Police (SAP) and the South African Defence Force (SADF).

> In my area at Umlazi, we, as COSAS, have recorded that within the first three months of 1990, 27 students were shot and killed by the ZPs. Almost all these students were active SRC members or they were killed because they were mistaken for SRC activists.

Another reason for school closures was the struggle around the issue of fees and school uniforms, which peaked at the beginning of 1990. Students demanded the introduction of one school uniform throughout the country as well as the refund of their school fees. In KwaZulu schools, Education Liaison Committees (ELCs) or sometimes chiefs, responded to these demands by instructing principals to close schools until students backed off from these demands. In many instances, particularly on the Natal North Coast, parents were asked to bring their children to school and to sign declarations stating that if their children made these demands they would be expelled. The shift of control away from principals into the hands of the ELCs and, in rural areas, local chiefs, is an indication of the extent to which the violence had become institutionalised.

The overall indication of the study is that violence is the single most important contributory factor to the absence of a proper learning environment at school. In fact, 10,2% of the total sample mentioned loss of concentration at school because of the violence, even if they did not actually drop out or change schools. In addition, 58,19% of students indicated that they were not ready for exams and the single most common reason given for this was the violence. The intimidation of teachers, particularly by vigilantes and police is another factor that has contributed to school closures.

Of the total sample, 87% of students reported having been directly and personally affected by the violence, the single most common way being harassment by vigilantes and police while at school. The second most common effect was having to leave school because of the violence and there is also an indication of high inter-school mobility where some students did not drop out completely but moved to other schools. Altogether, just over a quarter of students left or changed schools because of the violence.

CONCLUSIONS

i) Opportunities for schooling for African students in Natal are not only strongly influenced by the general crisis in African education and the struggles in education in general, but are also very much affected by the continued violence in the region. In fact, over the past 5 years, violence seems to have had a heavier impact on student opportunities than other factors inherent in apartheid education.

ii) The control of education by one party to the war – Inkatha – makes prop-

er educational provision almost impossible. The violence has led to the virtual collapse of African education in Natal.

iii) Violence does not merely affect education, but has become institutionalised in the very education system itself. This is because of the overlap between Inkatha, the KwaZulu bantustan and the entire apartheid edifice. The longer the violence continues, the more difficult it will be to sustain education provision for African students in Natal.

iv) The amount of social and psychological devastation makes it extremely difficult for students to sustain the learning process.

v) Perhaps the most important conclusion that one can draw from this study is that, despite its control over education in KwaZulu, Inkatha seems to be unable to provide education in a neutral manner. This dilemma is in fact a reflection of the contradictions of apartheid in an era of deepening mass struggles. Since this is the most important conclusion, it would be proper to explain the nature of these contradictions further, and their manifestations in the relationship between violence and education.

The first contradiction of apartheid education is located at the level of the relationship between the central state apparatus and its subordinate structures in the bantustans. The devolution of powers of educational provision to the bantustans was not meant to improve the quality of education in those apartheid enclaves, but rather to rationalise the provision of Bantu education. The bantustans are unable to provide quality education, thereby undermining the hegemony of bantustan bureaucracies over the mass of the people in their respective areas of control. Failure to deliver on the part of the bantustans stands in contradiction to the aims of the central apartheid state to create a collaborative ethnic petty bourgeoisie that will earn the respect and support of people on the ground. It is within this context that Inkatha is unable to improve the quality of educational provision in KwaZulu. Because of the intensification of struggles over education provision, and given the lack of necessary resources to improve education, Inkatha tends to deploy the very meagre resources through its patronage networks as an attempt to deal with mass struggles and to strengthen its own political hegemony. These contradictions place education in a state of perpetual conflict in KwaZulu and all the other bantustans.

The second dilemma that faces bantustan bureaucracies, especially KwaZulu, is that as the struggles against apartheid intensify, the bantustan bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie becomes ever more dependent on the apartheid

state for its own survival and reproduction. This dependency, because it places the bantustan bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in opposition to mass democratic struggles, can only be reproduced through intensified struggles and contestations over the state apparatus. The reason for this is that deepening dependency on the central apartheid state further discredits the bantustan ruling elite, forcing them to take ever harsher measures.

In some bantustans, attempts at resolution of these contradictions have led to the forcible replacement of the collaborative petty bourgeoisie by sections of the petty bourgeoisie who have realised that the only way out is to align themselves with the national liberation movement. The most classic example of this is the Transkei.

Implications for Reconstruction and Transformation of Education

South Africa has entered a new phase of political struggle, where there is a shift away from simple confrontation, to engaging the apartheid state in new ways. The advance of the struggle for democracy that has forced the regime to unban progressive organisations and open the political terrain has largely brought about this situation. The response of the national liberation and democratic movements to the current situation is important in determining the path towards liberation and the ending of apartheid. New strategies and tactics have to be adopted to face the current challenges.

The development of appropriate tactics and strategies is not merely dependent on the internal strengths and weaknesses of the democratic and national liberation movement, but is also dependent on how the movement understands and responds to the state's strategies in the present period. The apartheid regime has been forced into a situation where it can no longer continue to rule without allowing the national liberation and democratic movements to exist legally inside the country. However, this should not be interpreted as a sign that the regime has abandoned its intentions to rule this country. Rather it wants to accommodate the movement in its own new designs, thereby immobilising the people and aborting the revolution. The state wants to reproduce white rule and hegemony in new ways and to achieve this goal it is using a double strategy, that of engaging the national liberation and democratic movements in talks, and simultaneously using violence in order to weaken them.

The concrete manifestation of this strategy is the state's declaration of its intention to negotiate, while at the same time intensifying violence against

the people. Although the state's strategy prior to 2 February 1990 did have similar elements, there is a distinct difference now. Whilst earlier the state provided forums for negotiations and power to be exercised by African people, these were structures unilaterally created by the state and were so structured that they could not challenge the regime. They included bantustans, community councils, and proposals on the 'Great Indaba'. These structures and conceptions also excluded the national liberation and democratic movements. Since 2 February 1990, the state has created joint working groups, and has proposed a multi-party conference where all political formations, including the national liberation movement, can participate.

Over and above this, the state has undertaken initiatives that force the democratic movement to respond at an unexpectedly rapid pace. For example, on the education front the state has been engaging the NECC to participate in the resolution of the problems in African education. A Joint Working Group has been set up between the government and the democratic forces to deal with the education crisis. The above initiatives are not being undertaken solely by the state, but by the entire ruling class. For example, big business is approaching the ANC and the NECC, amongst others, with a whole range of proposals on joint activities on the development and education fronts.

By taking these actions, the ruling class is trying to commit the national liberation movement and the democratic forces to institutional arrangements at a pace which their organisational strength cannot cope with at the moment. The ruling class hopes to create a distance between the leadership and its mass base by forcing the leadership into institutional arrangements without adequate organisational back up. The aim of this strategy on the part of the ruling class is – as Ihron Rensburg has repeatedly pointed out – to lock the democratic forces into joint responsibility without the necessary authority.

It is also within the above context that the issue of development has come up. The state has, for instance, created the Independent Development Trust to attend to some of the most pressing development needs within the oppressed communities, and quickly invited the democratic movement to participate in determining the utilisation of these funds. This has presented the national liberation and democratic movements with a very real dilemma. On the one hand, partaking in such ventures can lead to joint responsibility for the problems created by apartheid, with a very real danger of alienating the masses on the ground. On the other hand, failure to engage such initiatives might lead to the

criticism that the democratic movement is failing to address the needs of the people on the ground, and that it is not genuinely interested in reconstruction and transformation. All these developments then, mark the new conjuncture in South Africa.

The state has intensified violence against communities with the specific aim of creating confusion and demoralisation within the ranks of forces for liberation. What is different about the present period is that the state is presenting this violence as emanating from within the oppressed communities themselves. This absolves the state from appearing as the aggressor and oppressor. The major strategy of the state is to assist vigilantes and other counter-revolutionary forces in more obscure and sophisticated ways than before. And in the process of doing this, the ruling class, together with its media, is promoting counter-revolutionary organisations and boosting their image as important forces that should be major parties at the negotiating table.

It is within this context that one should assess the possibilities of reconstruction and the transformation of education in South Africa. The immediate implication of the above analysis for transforming education in Natal is that one cannot address the education crisis unless there is also a clear strategy to end the violence, as well as a strategy to engage the post-February 1990 state initiatives. Even more pressing is the necessity to understand the relationship between these two components of the strategy of the ruling class in the present phase of our struggle. Therefore, in examining the implications of this study for reconstructing and transforming education, two issues will be explored. These are the relationship between the violence and the transformation of education and some of the strategic options facing the NECC in Natal in particular.

Violence and the Transformation of Education in Natal

It is obvious that one cannot talk about the reconstruction and transformation of education in Natal outside of the framework of the national struggles for the transformation of education and the national liberation struggle as a whole. This means that whilst attempts should be made to attend to the specific problems of education in Natal, these should be firmly linked to the national struggles to transform education. By so saying, one should not lose sight of some of the specific challenges facing the democratic movement in the education terrain in Natal.

It is clear from this study that one cannot meaningfully address the reconstruction and transformation of education in Natal without ending the violence. Any attempts to transform education in Natal in the context of the ongoing violence are bound to fail. Before one even addresses this question, it is important to clearly understand what the transformation of education entails in the present period. The more immediate task is to reconstruct African education in Natal. By reconstruction one means the re-establishment of a learning environment in African schools and the restoration of the confidence of the students and the teachers in the learning process. This is also a challenge nationally, given the widespread collapse of African education throughout the country.

The task of reconstruction should be carried out in such a way that it is transformative. In other words, the task should not simply be to reconstruct African education as a separate entity within separate education departments. The reconstruction process itself should at least lay the foundations for a rapid advance to the creation of a single, non-racial education department. In concrete terms this means that part of the task of reconstruction should entail an intensified struggle for the abolition of the DEC. Such a strategic perspective is important in that it can begin to form the context within which campaigns such as the 'Back to School', 'Intensive Learning' and 'Education Charter' campaigns should be waged. The first two campaigns in particular are largely related to the task of reconstructing African education. The weakness of these campaigns so far has been that they have been waged in isolation from this wider context. In Natal in particular, as this study has clearly shown, there is no way that an intensive learning campaign can be successfully waged outside of a campaign to dismantle the DEC and bring an end to the violence.

It is, however, inadequate to simply state that the end of violence is a prerequisite for the process of transformation of education. Posing the problem in this way can lead to a separation of the ending of violence from the struggle for the reconstruction and transformation of education. One of the characteristics of the violence in Natal, as distinct from that in the Transvaal, is that it has become institutionalised. The violence has affected every facet of social life in Natal and, in turn, every aspect of social life has become a contested terrain and, consequently, a terrain of violence. These include struggles over territorial control; the forced political alignment of chiefs, councillors and izinduna with Inkatha; claims that even pension fund pay-outs are linked to Inkatha membership; registration at schools; and the pledge that must be signed by civil servants

declaring loyalty to the KwaZulu government – which in effect means loyalty to Inkatha. Perhaps the most glaring aspect of this institutionalisation is an attempt to equate 'Zuluness' with Inkatha, and the consequent contestations and violent confrontations that arise out of these attempts to impose and/or resist this imposition of 'Zuluness' on the people of Natal.

Two main factors have led to this institutionalisation. Firstly, the length, scale and intensity of the violence in Natal. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Inkatha's political, bureaucratic and ideological base is in Natal. Natal is its political base in the sense that that is where Inkatha's largest network lies. It is the bureaucratic base in the sense that the KwaZulu bantustan, on which Inkatha thrives, is geographically located in Natal. In other words, it is in Natal that Inkatha has available to itself a whole subordinate state machinery that it uses to reproduce itself as a political force.

Violence does not affect education as a phenomenon that is introduced from outside the structures of education; violence has become a key component of the very educational institutions themselves. This has happened because African education in Natal has become a generator of violence, and is used as an instrument of war. In other words, violence has become institutionalised in the education sphere. This means that education struggles in Natal have, *de facto*, become struggles against the violence. However, this fact should not be interpreted as meaning that the strategies of the democratic movement should be left at the level of struggling for educational transformation. Unless there is a very clear conceptualisation of the relationship between education and the violence, and a specific strategy to end the violence, education struggles *per se* will not address the education crisis in Natal in its totality.

The above conceptualisation, can be seen to be leading the democratic movement into an inescapable, vicious circle; that is, the education crisis cannot be addressed until the violence is ended, and violence in education cannot be ended until the KwaZulu bantustan and the DEC in particular are dismantled. The challenge should not be posed in this way. Rather, the struggle for the transformation of education should be seen as inseparably linked to the struggle to end the violence. In fact, violence cannot be ended until apartheid is ended, and education is an important component of the struggle to end apartheid.

The approach to the question of reconstruction and development is important in addressing the education crisis and the disruptions and shortages caused

by the violence. The ruling class argues that the root causes of the violence are the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the region. From this premise they argue that the way to bring about peace is to address the development needs of the communities. This approach is problematic in the sense that it does not answer the question as to why the violence has for a long time been localised in Natal and has only recently spread to the PWV region, when the conditions of oppressed people are the same throughout the country. Obviously, socio-economic conditions do have a role to play in the continuation of the violence, but they cannot be said to be the primary causal factor nor even the primary factor in the continuation of the violence. Of course, in many instances, the ruling class has tried to dangle the carrot of development in an attempt to impose 'peace' over ravaged communities. The Independent Development Trust has indicated that it is prepared to fund joint development projects between the ANC and Inkatha.

The fundamental dilemma facing the democratic movement on the issue of reconstruction and development is that such programmes cannot be effectively undertaken whilst apartheid is still in place. This is because the current violence will not come to an end until apartheid is dismantled. At the same time, urgent development programmes to deal with the effects of the violence cannot wait until apartheid is dismantled. What needs to be addressed in particular is the question of the extent to which development is an integral component of a strategy to bring about an end to violence.

Strategic Options Facing the NECC on the Ending of Violence and the Transformation of Education

a) This study concludes by highlighting some of the strategic options available to the NECC in addressing the issue of violence and education in Natal.

Our study has made it clear that Natal is no less typical than the rest of the country in so far as the crisis facing African schooling in general is concerned. Of course, the violence in Natal has not only worsened the situation, but has fed on the existing crisis in African education to produce what is perhaps the most disastrous period in the history of African education in the region. The high drop-out rate, coupled with the dislocation of students and their communities, requires the national liberation and democratic movements to begin formulating ways and means of addressing educational provision outside of the formal schooling system as highlighted in the study by Gultig and Hart (1990).

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This must not be done as something independent of the struggles to transform education, but as an integral part of those struggles. A new education system in South Africa will have to be largely biased towards the provision of education outside of the formal school. This is because a large number of the students who are presently losing opportunities for schooling will not be easily absorbed back into formal schools. This problem is heightened at secondary school level.

Many of those students who might find their way back to school will be above the age of 18. This means that our schools, as is already beginning to be the case, will have a significant proportion of young adults as students. As was shown in the study, 84,02% of African matric students are 18 years and older, with the average age for Standard 10 being 20 years. Obviously one of the effects of the violence will be to raise the age-level of students, given the extent of disruptions taking place in this period. This has serious implications for the provision of compulsory and free education. The thinking of the democratic movement on how many years of free education a democratic South Africa should have will have to take into account the legacies of the past and particularly the high drop-out rate.

b) Another phenomenon that has been shown by this study is the increasing inability of parents to finance the education of their children. Given the high number of unemployed parents and the fact that the overwhelming majority of students come from poor, working class backgrounds, financing of education will have to be addressed as one of the fundamental issues. The implication of this is that the burden for financing even primary and secondary school education will have to be borne by the state. Whether a democratic state can afford this is open to question, given other competing areas of need such as health and housing. Perhaps what needs to be considered is the extent to which state financing of education should be tied to need rather than levels of schooling.

c) The NECC should activate one of the resolutions taken at its 1990 regional conference:

> That a regional campaign be launched by the NECC to return the control of education as an interim measure in KwaZulu and Natal to the DET; that this campaign be linked and co-ordinated with that of the JWC of COSATU and UDF; that the NECC in Natal be represented in the Joint

> Working Committee through the office of the regional secretary (NECC – Natal, Conference Resolutions, June, 1990).

Although the NECC has taken up this issue by challenging the control of schools by the DEC in certain areas, the essence of the resolution has not been implemented. In the implementation of this resolution two contextual factors need to be taken into account. Firstly, an assessment needs to be made of the implications of the January 29 1991 peace agreement between the ANC and Inkatha. The NECC needs to work out its own response to this agreement and what implications the implementation of this resolution would have on the agreement. In effect, the resolution does not bind the NECC, even though Inkatha is very keen to bind all organisations in the democratic movement who are aligned to the ANC. However, even more important is the fact that the January 29 agreement contains a clause to the effect that community facilities should be used in a neutral manner. Particular mention is made of schools.

The NECC could launch a campaign by using this clause as a starting point to challenge Inkatha control over schools. But there are certain traps in such an approach. One is that Inkatha could take it as meaning that the NECC automatically binds itself to the agreement. Also, a potential weakness of the agreement is that it tacitly accepts the control of schools by KwaZulu, and therefore it might be difficult to challenge the very existence of the DEC within its parameters.

On the other hand, to challenge Inkatha's control over education by demanding the dismantling of the DEC will put Inkatha under the spotlight and expose its inconsistency in claiming to be fighting for a new democratic South Africa, free of apartheid, but at the same time hanging on for dear life to the KwaZulu bantustan. This study provides adequate evidence to expose the fact that in the context of the on-going violence, the existence of the DEC is not conducive to a proper learning environment in Natal.

A second contextual factor that must be taken into account in embarking on such a campaign is the extent to which Inkatha is unable to abandon the KwaZulu bantustan. Of particular importance here is the ability of the NECC to protect and defend this campaign on all fronts. The lesson that has been learnt by other organisations in Natal is that, unless one is able to defend such campaigns, the ruling class, to the detriment of the strategic objectives one wants to achieve, may exploit them. In this instance it is imperative that the NECC works towards a joint campaign with the major organisations repre-

sented in the restructured Joint Working Committee of the ANC, SACP and COSATU. Also of particular importance here is that, although one cannot separate Inkatha from the KwaZulu bantustan, peace with Inkatha does not mean an end to the struggle for a united South Africa without the bantustans. This also represents Inkatha's weakest link in its control over the KwaZulu bantustan.

d) The 'Back-to-School', 'Intensive Learning' and 'Education Charter' campaigns should be located firmly within the struggle to end the violence in Natal. So far these campaigns, particularly the first two, have been launched in isolation from the struggle to end the violence in the region. The study has clearly shown that the success of these campaigns in Natal is largely dependent on the progress being made towards ending the violence. It should be clear that there can be no intensive learning in the context of violence, in as much as there can be no 'back to school' and intensive learning within the context of the DEC. In short, this means that the continued existence of separate education departments stands in contradiction to the achievement of the goals of People's Education.

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School Ownership in South Africa

JOHN PAMPALLIS

1993

This article, first published as an Education Monitor in 1993, looks at the different types of schools in South Africa, classified by who owns them – i.e. whether they are state, community or privately owned – and who finances them. Information is given for all education departments with the exception of former Bantustans Transkei and Bophuthatswana, which did not supply such details. In addition, some important questions relating to school ownership and control are discussed.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Until the End of 1990

Two types of school existed:

i) **Government schools** (*status quo* schools). These were totally funded by the government and were for the use of whites. Administrative control was mainly exercised through the four provincial education departments. They constituted the vast majority of schools for whites in South Africa. Schools could raise extra funds from parents and other sources, but could not force parents to pay fees.

ii) **Private schools** registered with the department, receiving subsidies of 45%, 15%, or 0% from the state. The amount received was based on criteria which ostensibly measured the quality of the education given by the school but which, in practice, appear to be applied arbitrarily. These were formerly all-white schools and, by law, at least half of their students had (and still have) to be white. In 1989, there were 233 such schools in the

country (SAIRR, 1990:804). In 1988, 13,6% of their pupils were black (5,3% African), but the percentage varies widely from school to school (SAIRR, 1988/89:887, 247).

From the beginning of 1991

Changes were announced during 1991 to make provision for the enrolment of black students at white state schools. From the beginning of 1991, white state schools would be able, under certain circumstances, to change their status to one of three new 'models', as outlined below. For a school to change to one of these models, at least 80% of the parents would have to vote in an election, with 72% of them voting in favour of changing to a particular school model.

Model A: This was a former state school which had been privatised and received a state subsidy – declining from 85% to 45% of operating costs over four years. By the beginning of 1992, only one school had converted to Model A.

Model B: This remained a state school but the school's Management Council decided its admissions policy. What this meant was that these schools could admit black students, although the percentage of black students could not exceed 50%. In most Model B schools, the number of black students was very small and was generally controlled through entrance tests and other exclusionary devices. By the beginning of 1992, 692 white schools had voted to become Model B.

Model C: This was formerly a full state school that converted into a state-aided school. Such a school received a subsidy to cover 75% of its normal operating expenses. The rest of its funds had to be raised by the school's parent-elected Governing Body through fees and donations. They were, like Model B schools, allowed to admit black students. Only 51 schools had voted to convert to Model C by the beginning of 1992.

From the beginning of 1992

One further model was introduced:

Model D: This was a school belonging to the white Department of Education and Culture but which was allowed to recruit an unlimited number of black students. There were only six Model D schools in the whole country at the beginning of 1992, all of which had been in danger of closing due to declining enrolments of white students. By the beginning of 1993, the number of Model D schools had risen to 17.

At the beginning of 1992, there were 1983 state and former state schools, with the breakdown as follows: *status quo* schools – 1 233; Model A – one; Model B – 692; Model C – 51; Model D – 18 (Hansard, 17 February, 1992). At this time, 7 923 black students had been admitted to formerly all-white schools while 129 332 places remained vacant at white schools (SAIRR, 1992/93:592).

From 1 April 1992

In early 1992, the government announced that all white state schools (except Model D) would become Model C schools from 1 April 1992, unless the parents voted by a two-thirds majority to remain as *status quo* or Model B schools. *Status quo* and Model B schools would face severe funding cutbacks that would necessitate staff cuts. Unlike Model C schools, they would not be able to recover these funds from parents through charging compulsory school fees. The change to Model C would mean that parents would have to pay substantial school fees – well over R500 annually in most cases and, in the more prestigious schools, over R2 000.

From April 1992, 96% of white state schools became Model C schools and their fixed property and equipment was given by the state to the Governing Body of each school (although the Governing Bodies do not have the right to sell or mortgage it). The state's control over the white schools has thus been weakened and a great deal of autonomy has been given to individual white schools – including the right to charge compulsory school fees and to determine the admissions policy of the school.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE: HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Three types of school exist:

i) **State schools.** These are owned and totally funded by the government. In 1991, there were 416 such schools, of which 276 were primary schools and 140 were secondary schools. State schools constitute 91% of all schools under the House of Delegates (House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture, p:1-2).

ii) **State-aided schools**. Most of these were started by communities, which, through various committees, own the physical property of the schools. However, the schools receive a 100% subsidy to cover their running costs (including teachers' salaries, maintenance, and other expenses). In 1991,

there were 37 such schools, of which 35 were primary schools and only two were secondary schools. State-aided schools constitute only 8% of schools under the House of Delegates (House of Delegates, Department of Education and Culture, p.12).

iii) **Private schools** registered with the department that may be subsidised. In 1990, only four private schools were registered with the Department of Education and Culture, House of Delegates – three Muslim schools and one Christian school. In addition, in 1990 the department paid the tuition fees of Indian students at Christian Brothers College in Bloemfontein (a private Catholic school), presumably because there was no Indian school in the area and the other state schools did not accept Indians (House of Delegates, 1990, p.40).

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE: HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Three types of school exist:

i) **State schools.** These are owned and totally funded by the government. In 1988, there were 1 015 such schools, of which 798 were primary schools and 217 were secondary schools. They constitute approximately half of the total number of coloured schools but probably cater for more than half the students since the vast majority of secondary schools (whose enrolment tends to be higher than primary schools) are in this category (House of Representatives, 1989:85).

ii) **State-aided schools**. Churches mainly own these and other community structures but teachers' salaries (and sometimes other expenses such as rent, lights and water) are paid by the government. In 1988, there were 1 012 such schools, of which 1 006 were primary schools and only six were secondary schools. About half of all coloured schools were state-aided, but they probably catered for less than half the students – see point (i) above (House of Representatives, 1989:85).

iii) **Private schools** registered with the department that may or may not be subsidised. There are very few such schools.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Three types of school exist:

i) **Public schools.** These are owned and totally funded by the government.

Schools may establish a school fund to supplement the funds they receive from the state, but parents and students may not legally be compelled to contribute to it (Hansard, 17–19 June, 1992). In 1990, there were 1 741 public primary schools and 474 public secondary schools under the Department of Education and Training (DET) (DET, 1990:44, 52, 54, 56). In 1992, there were 2 307 public (primary and secondary) schools with 1,965,376 students under the DET (DET, 1992).

ii) **State-aided schools.** These are mainly farm schools and are subsidised by the state. The DET Annual Report (1990:50) reports that, 'As far as state-aided primary farm schools are concerned, farm owners receive a subsidy amounting to 75 per cent (or 80 per cent in certain border areas) of the valuation of the facilities, whichever is lower.' This, however, does not really reflect the actual situation since applications for the subsidy are dependent on the availability of funds in the departmental budget, which is insufficient to accommodate all the subsidy applications at 75% (Ardington, 1992:8).

Most state aided schools are primary schools: in 1990, there were 568 state-aided primary schools with a student enrolment of 458 840 (42% of the total DET primary school enrolment) (DET, 1990:52). By contrast, there were only 12 state-aided secondary schools with an enrolment of 15 011 students, or 2,6% of the total DET secondary school enrolment (ibid:56). In 1992, there were 5 851 non-public primary and secondary schools (all but about 80 of which were state-aided schools) with 526 491 students.

iii) **Private schools** registered with the department. 'After such a school has been registered and evaluated by the Department, it is subsidised at 0, 15, or 45 per cent of a fixed standard of resource provisioning.' (ibid:68). In 1990, there were 42 private primary schools (0,56% of all DET primary schools) and 15 private secondary schools (2,9% of all DET secondary schools) registered with the DET (ibid:54, 56). During the course of 1990 alone, a further 11 private schools applied for registration, indicating a growing interest in private schooling, probably because of the chaotic state of African public schooling (ibid:68).

EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS IN THE 'SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES'

Four types of school exist:

i) **Community schools.** These schools are built and maintained by communities. (The community may receive a subsidy on completion of building.) As far as operating expenses go, the government, until recently, paid only the teachers' salaries and nothing else. In recent years, there have been a few changes; for example, since 1987, the KwaZulu government has responded to student and community pressures by taking responsibility for providing textbooks and stationery.

ii) **Government (or territorial) schools.** These are owned and totally funded by the bantustan government.

iii) **Private schools** registered with the department and receiving state subsidies.

iv) **State-aided schools.** These are mainly farm schools or hospital schools.

The following table shows the number of each type of school and the number of pupils attending each type of school in 1990:

	GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS		COMMUNITY SCHOOLS		STATE-AIDED SCHOOLS		PRIVATE SCHOOLS		TOTAL	
	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment
Qwa-Qwa	137	105,000	1	1,030	0	0	0	0	138	106,030
Lebowa	8	8,301	1,717	909,550	12	9,531	14	4,332	1,751	930,044
Gazankulu	48	38,412	436	250,213	1	42	0	0	485	288,667
KwaZulu	21	11,063	2,994	1,325,742	12	1,205	6	2,801	3,033	1,450,871
KaNgwane	55	52,024	223	167,753	0	0	0	0	278	220,809
KwaNdebele	3	1,905	212	118,970	4	245	0	0	219	121,120
Ciskei	519	201,911	204	71,781	3	470	1	691	729	274,210
Venda	125	61,511	536	181,934	0	0	4	587	665	244,032
TOTAL	916	482,817	6,323	3,276,748	31	5,791	25	8,413	7,295	3,781,781

(Table compiled from official statistics supplied on request by the HSRC.)

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SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES

One of the most interesting aspects of the information above is its revelation of the weakness of the state school sector. Only in the schools of four education departments (i.e. Ciskei, QwaQwa and the Houses of Delegates and Representatives) do the state schools outnumber the community or state-aided schools. In the other eight education departments for which this information is available, the state school sector is much smaller than the non-state sector.

In a number of bantustans (for example, Lebowa, KwaZulu, KwaNdebele), the state sector is almost negligible. In the Department of Education and Training, there are over two and a half times more non-state than state (usually referred to as 'public') schools, although there are over three and a half times as many students in state as in non-state schools. This is largely because most of the non-state schools are state-aided farm schools that tend to be smaller than the state schools.

As far as white education is concerned, the state school sector has recently been almost completely destroyed by the introduction of Model C, which has effectively been forced on all the former state schools by the Department of Education and Culture in the House of Assembly.

In early 1993, there was speculation that plans existed for the Indian and coloured schools to be converted from state to state-aided schools. The recent attempts by the House of Representatives to retrench teachers – which failed due to vigorous protests by the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) – may have been intended as the first move towards a conversion to Model C-type schooling. If this was the case, the intention could have been that those communities who wanted – and could afford – more teachers in their schools, would have to pay for them.

Whatever the truth about plans to convert the coloured and Indian schools, the fact remains that most African schools and over 95% of white schools are no longer owned by the state. This is not to say that the differences between white and black schools are beginning to disappear. To begin with, not only are facilities at the white schools infinitely superior, but in general, they serve the wealthiest communities in the country, while the African community schools serve the poorest. This means that the former are quite well subsidised by the parents while the latter remain pitifully under-funded.

As we move towards a new political dispensation in South Africa, the structure of the education system is increasingly becoming the object of scrutiny

and contestation by various political and other interest groups. The government has already taken steps to restructure the schooling system in ways which are unacceptable to its opponents in the democratic movement, notably the African National Congress and the National Education Coordinating Committee. From 1 April 1993, Piet Marais has been appointed as Minister of Educational Coordination in order to oversee the biggest exercise in unilateral restructuring yet – combining the various apartheid education departments into one.

The question of who owns and finances the schools is obviously one of the major issues that must be faced in the future. It is clear that the present government does not see the need for major changes in this respect. It has already gutted the white state school system and shows no signs of wanting to tamper with the ownership of the African schools. If it does have plans for the coloured and Indian schools, it is likely to be in the direction of weakening state influence.

The democratic movement has traditionally seen the state as being primarily responsible for the provision of schooling but has not tackled the question of state ownership in any thorough manner. It is not intended here to discuss this rather complex question, but merely to reveal the present situation and to point out some of the issues that need further consideration and study. Among these are the questions of:

i) whether it is necessary for a democratic South African state to extend its ownership and financial responsibilities over the under-resourced African community schools if the liberation movement is to fulfil its mission of improving the educational opportunities of the majority of the population;

ii) whether it is necessary for a democratic state to reconvert the Model C schools to full state schools, or whether the cause of democratisation would be better served by modifying the regulations that govern them. The state, for example, could continue to fund only teachers' salaries while curtailing the schools' right to compel the payment of school fees and set their own admissions policies;

iii) what the state's policy should be with regard to private schools (i.e. should they be encouraged or discouraged, and by what means?).

If the new state desires to take the present state-aided sector into full state ownership, it will still have to grapple with the practicalities of doing so –

especially the question of whether it can afford to take over the financial responsibilities involved. If it cannot afford to take over the whole state-aided sector immediately, it will have to decide which schools should be given priority for conversion to state school status. This will pose a dilemma. If the African schools are taken over first so that they can be upgraded by the state, this might involve allowing the Model C schools to continue existing for a long time. This in turn has the potential of perpetuating racial and ethnic disparities in a new dual system.

This will be a difficult problem to solve and will require both detailed financial information and careful political consideration.

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People's Education for People's Power

BOBBY SOOBRAYAN

1990

This paper was presented at an Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA) seminar held in Durban on 16 September, 1989 and published by the EPU in February 1990.

I have been asked to talk on the topic 'People's Education for People's Power'. Although I have done research on the topic and participated in organisations struggling for People's Education, I will not be presenting a definitive model for People's Education – as if it is something that has been constructed by some experts and packaged, ready to be 'marketed'.

This brings me to what is perhaps a central feature of People's Education – that it is a *process*. There is no model for People's Education and there are no blueprints or seminal texts on People's Education that can be subjected to analysis, evaluation or critique. It is a process that is currently unfolding in South Africa, a process which is aimed at transforming the shortcomings in the present education system into alternatives by a mass movement of teachers, students, parents, workers and academics.

What I am going to say about People's Education is based on an analysis of events and struggles in education and on an interpretation of speeches by officials of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and resolutions emerging from NECC conferences.

To begin to understand People's Education, it is important to examine the context in which it originated. I have already said that People's Education is not a definitive theoretical model. This is not to say that People's Education is a-theoretical – on the contrary, it has very definite *theoretical* underpinnings.

People's Education developed out of an historical moment, at which a number of historical contingencies intersected. It emerged in response to the acute crisis in education that culminated in 1985 when black schooling came to a virtual standstill. This crisis was the product of a legacy of apartheid education and a history of resistance to apartheid education.

Some of the major events of this history were the boycotts in response to the Bantu Education Act of 1953, leading up to the alternative schools of the African National Congress (ANC) in the late 1950s, the Soweto student uprising in 1976, followed by the 1980 boycotts and the uprising beginning in 1984. What is clear from these events is that People's Education was born out of a rejection of apartheid education. It is also important to note that the demands for alternative education went beyond a mere improvement in the quantity of education provision and included the need to change the quality of education as well.

An examination of the major political events of the same period shows a clear resonance between periods of heightened political activity and the events I have just mentioned. The 1960s boycotts corresponded with heightened activity by the ANC; the 1976 boycott corresponded with the resurgence of trade union and community organisation, beginning in 1973 and gaining impetus in 1976; the heightened social upheavals beginning in 1983 and the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) corresponded with the heightened resistance in black schooling starting in 1984.

It is clear that the struggles in education articulate in a very definite way with developments on the political terrain, to the extent that proponents of People's Education argue that education and politics are inextricably linked.

The slogan 'People's Education for People's Power' arose at a time when the rallying call in the broader political struggle was to replace the collapsing apartheid structures in the townships with people's structures, in an attempt to build 'People's Power'.

There were clear parallels on the education terrain. The official education structures failed to gain any legitimacy with the majority of South Africans, who saw apartheid education as not only grossly unequal but also as a system designed to maintain and reproduce the submission of blacks to a socio-economic formation based on oppression, exploitation, poverty, social dislocation and powerlessness.

Furthermore, by 1985 these structures had, to all intents and purposes, col-

lapsed rendering them incapable of conducting even apartheid education effectively. People's Education therefore, was an attempt to create a legitimate context for education. It was an attempt to get students to go back to school. In certain parts of the country communities took it upon themselves to rebuild schools (contrary to state propaganda that schools were being burnt).

The slogan 'Liberation Before Education' was replaced with the slogan 'People's Education for People's Power' at a national consultative conference convened by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) in November 1985. It has been argued that the slogan 'Liberation before Education' was instigated by the state to diffuse the growing momentum of alternative education. One of the considerations at the conference was that even the limited skills that could be acquired through apartheid education were necessary for the liberation struggle. This was underpinned by the fact that the current generation of leaders were themselves products of apartheid education.

However, an essential component of this strategy was for people to take control of their own education in order to use the existing space for the formulation and implementation of People's Education.

The NECC, an umbrella structure, was formed to co-ordinate the activities of education organisations concerned with the crisis in education. The policy that emerged at the NECC conference convened in March 1986 contained three major elements:

i) It formulated guidelines for a future system of People's Education.
ii) Whilst it recognised that People's Education could not be fully implemented until after the total abolition of apartheid, the process to build People's Education could start immediately.
iii) That in both the immediate and the post-apartheid context the skilling of black people was an essential part of implementing People's Education, as well as achieving and sustaining national liberation.

It is the first element that is a central concern of this paper and I will now expand briefly on it. Arising out of this, People's Education is characterised by the following guidelines:

i) It is based on decades of resistance.
ii) It is based on the assumption that education and politics are inextricably linked in a manner that the transformation of education should occur within the context of social transformation.
iii) It is at once an education strategy as well as a political strategy. There

is an emphasis on the mobilisation of people at a mass level to participate in the transformation of education at all levels, including in the formulation of alternatives.

iv) It must serve the interests of the majority of the people of South Africa by focusing on empowerment and the eradication of illiteracy.

v) Education is defined broadly to include formal, informal and non-formal education of people of all ages.

vi) It must be aimed at overcoming negative social values such as elitism, individualism, authoritarianism and competitiveness – and in their place instil democratic values, collectivism and a wider social consciousness.

vii) It must overcome the evils of apartheid education that leads to stunted intellectual development by encouraging creativity and critical thinking.

viii) It is a process that can only reach its full potential after apartheid is abolished but must always be reflexive and responsive to changing needs and conditions.

Much can be said about the above features. So much that one cannot do justice to it within the time constraints of this talk. In fact, numerous conferences and workshops have been convened throughout the country since 1986 to flesh out these guidelines. For the present I would like to expand on only a few of these features.

One of the key principles of People's Education is the principle of democracy – as seen from a particular perspective because democracy can be defined in many different ways. In terms of People's Education, and contrary to what some perspectives may argue, education can never be seen as neutral. Notions such as value free education, 'scientific curriculating' as espoused by the De Lange Commission, are rejected.

Education always reflects the interests of those who are in control – those who decide what kind of knowledge is selected, how it is taught, by whom and to whom. Education is seen as a powerful weapon that has the potential to impact on its socio-economic and political context. Under Nationalist control education is used to further subservience and oppression. Whereas in the hands of the people it becomes a weapon for liberation.

Therefore, for education to serve the interests of the majority, the majority must not only control it, but the people must also participate in its conception, formulation and implementation. This, from the perspective of People's Education, is true democracy – not an education which is formulated and

packaged in committees or commissions, and then diluted with a range of other issues for which a mandate is sought from the white electorate during elections which take place every five years.

Such blueprints or models for education are doomed from the outset to be rejected by the majority. I must hasten to add at this point that this does not imply that experts have no role to play. On the contrary, theirs is an important role to be facilitated through their participation in the process of building People's Education. It is argued that in this way expert knowledge can be genuinely linked with popular aspirations that flow organically from struggle. It is not the role of the expert to 'tell' the people what should be done but rather to service, through active participation, the process of building a democratic and relevant education.

The open and democratic nature of People's Education has a negative side to it in that it allows for different interpretations to be attached to it. The state, for example, has tried to appropriate some aspects of the term and to give other aspects its own definition. People's Education has been described as a plot aimed at the violent overthrow of the state, in keeping with the 'rooi gevaar' or 'swart gevaar' manipulations of white voter emotions and fears. The purpose, of course, is to legitimise, in the eyes of the voters, the repression of People's Education and to pre-empt the participation of certain sectors of our polarised society in the process of building People's Education.

It is often alleged that People's Education derives from a Marxist-Leninist philosophical framework. An analysis of People's Education will show that it is not based on a single philosophical perspective – it contains many different philosophical strands. It may very well happen that a particular strand will become dominant in the future but this will depend on how the struggle for People's Education and national liberation unfolds. What is important is that the ideology will develop organically from a process through which mass organisations engage the concrete issues and challenges in the people's lived experience. The issue here is not to judge People's Education in relation to this or that ideology, but rather to judge it in terms of its responsiveness to the true aspirations of the majority in South Africa.

Lest I be misunderstood, it is incumbent upon me to qualify what I have just said. Although People's Education is made up of different philosophical strands, all these strands fall within a broad philosophical paradigm that is fundamentally different from the paradigms which inform the present education system

and some of the other reform proposals being mooted in South Africa today. To illustrate, I will look at just one example. Both the De Lange Commission and the proposals emanating from the kwa-Natal Indaba accept the present aims of education as an unproblematic given. This is consequent upon the view that education can be value-free and neutral. One of the consequences of this view is the narrow emphasis placed on technicism and vocationalism. The end result is that these proposals involve the provision of more of the same kind of education (albeit with a greater emphasis on vocational training) to more people.

In contrast to this, the starting point for People's Education is to problematise the aim of education. In People's Education, equal emphasis is placed on vocational skills training and all round life skills that equip students to fulfil their roles in society.

Although this may fall outside my brief, I feel that this paper will be incomplete unless I address the question of how People's Education relates to the theme of this seminar: Equal Education for All. At a minimum, I would like to raise what I consider to be important questions in this regard.

WHAT IS EQUAL EDUCATION?

This question can be answered in many different ways depending on the perspective from which it is approached. From a People's Education perspective, equal education can only prevail if the aims and relevance of the education system in question are consonant with the needs and aspirations of the majority of the people. Equal education does not imply simply making available to all an education system imposed from the top that could be out of tandem with the interests of the majority. It also raises important questions about ideology, the form and content of education: what is taught, who teaches it and to whom?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL?

At the heart of this question lies the issue of access to education. Numerous studies have shown that access to education in South Africa is structured by the individual's race and class background. It will be nonsensical to suggest that we can have equal education for all in a situation where school fees are prohibitively expensive for the majority in South Africa. This kind of situation will be even more immoral given the history of colonial and apartheid rule through

which the majority were systematically impoverished and the minority economically privileged.

Therefore privatisation of education cannot be seen as a solution in this regard. Furthermore, we cannot have equal access to education for all without socio-economic and political change. The educationists among us will know only too well the strong impact of the home environment on scholastic performance.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate what I said at the outset – that People's Education is a process. It is a political strategy and an educational strategy based on mass participation. The extent of its viability and acceptability to all South Africans is dependent on the active participation of all sectors and communities in society and its formulation.

In this regard the teacher unity talks present us with an ideal forum within which questions about People's Education should be raised. It is also of interest to note that education organisations are beginning to regroup and to be strengthened. These initiatives deserve strong support in the interests of democratic education, not only through solidarity action but also by active participation of all organisations and individuals who reject apartheid education and who would want to become a part of the broad movement for change.

People's Education has caught the imagination of the majority in South Africa. This support has a resonance in every sector of society: parents, students, teachers, workers and academics. This by itself makes People's Education significant. Therefore any reform initiative from the state or the kwa-Natal Indaba has little chance of success if this major historical thrust continues to be ignored.

Florence Mkhize, a member of the Lamontville ECC and a student leader, negotiate with officials of the Department of Education and Training over conditions in schools–May 1986. Photo: Omar Badsha

11 THE ROLE OF PTSAs IN AN EMERGING DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

The papers in this section are closely linked to the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) and its conference on democratic governance in education held in the run-up to the 1994 elections. The first, written after the 1994 elections, is based on a report presented to one of the commissions at the conference. The paper captures the state of the PTSAs/PTAs at the time of the elections and speculates on their possible role in the democratic order. The second paper, namely 'The Relationship Between PTSAs/PTAs and the State' was a commissioned discussion paper and introduces a range of issues around possible relationships between the PTSAs/PTAs and the state. The third paper begins to suggest an interface between democratic school governance structures and civil society.

Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs): Present State and Future Prospects

SIBUSISO SITHOLE
1994

This article, first published as an Education Monitor in 1994, provides an assessment of the state of PTSAs nationally, and examines their relevance in the new system of education governance. It begins by providing a broad historical background to the emergence of PTSAs. Secondly, it defines PTSAs and discusses how operations and composition vary from school to school. Thirdly, it attempts a critical appraisal of PTSAs, examining their problems and weaknesses, their relationship with the NECC and Local Education Co-ordinating Committees (LECCs), their relevance and future prospects. The article draws on the report of the EPU Natal to the NECC on the development of a training programme for PTSAs (September 1993).

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In the mid-1980s, as PW Botha's government was plunged into an all-round crisis at political, social and economic levels, rudimentary organs of people's power, such as the street and defence committees and people's courts, emerged as a substantial challenge to the illegitimate and discredited structures and institutions of apartheid, particularly in the black townships. These organs of people's power did not simply render apartheid institutions impotent and unworkable; they were also seen as the embodiment of people's power and participatory democracy by a broad range of sectors.

Against this background, a new strategy for addressing the volatile crisis in education emerged, characterised by the slogan 'People's Education for People's Power'. The organisational vehicle for this was the National Consultative Conference on the Education Crisis, convened by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee (SPCC) in December 1985 and, subsequently, the first National

Conference of the NECC in March 1986. This slogan emphasised the dialectical relationship between the struggle to transform the education system and the wider struggle for political and economic freedom.

The slogan also drew attention to the need not to simply lament the failings of apartheid education, but to develop an alternative. In this context, the push for the establishment of PTSAs began in earnest. The rationale behind the establishment of PTSAs was a desire to shift the balance of power away from the much-despised school committees to parents, workers, teachers, students and their organisations. PTSAs were seen as the organisational machinery through which people's education could be implemented, albeit in a limited form. It was recognised from the beginning that as long as real power still rested with the apartheid state, people's education could not be substantially brought about; full implementation would have to await the installation of a national democratic state.

From December 1985 to February 1990, the Nationalist government (faced with heightened resistance to its reform programme and the collapse of its apartheid structures) developed a two-pronged strategy of repression on the one hand and reform on the other. Through the declaration of successive states of emergency, it unleashed an unbridled repression which saw the deployment of troops in townships and schools, large-scale detentions without trial, muzzling of the press, restrictions on organisations and individuals, and the escalation of the reign of terror by vigilante groups and death squads. South Africa became a police state controlled by securocrats in the Joint Management Centres (JMCs) which were co-ordinated by the State Security Council.

Combined with this repression, a sophisticated reform programme – the 'Win the Heart and Mind' (WHAM) strategy – was introduced in a desperate attempt to sow divisions within the community, and to convince the international community that the government was ruling with the consent of the governed. The programme emphasised the cosmetic socio-economic uplift ment of certain areas that were identified as flashpoints of conflict – for example, housing in Alexandra. A toothless National Statutory Council was also proposed; it was designed to co-opt individuals and organisations into a political settlement that would eventually prolong the lease on life for minority rule while at the same time bypassing the liberation movement.

In the educational sphere, organisations that were at the forefront of people's education, like the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the

NECC, were banned and restricted and their leadership either detained or forced into exile. The advocacy of people's education in any form was declared unlawful. Most learning institutions were turned into battle zones. The crisis in education continued unabated.

These conditions made it virtually impossible to undertake any meaningful organisation of PTSAs. Furthermore, teachers – an important component of PTSAs – were either unorganised or organised in ethnically-based and often conservative unions, with the exception of the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) and the Western Cape Teachers Union (WECTU) which, by comparison, were fairly small. The National Teacher Unity Forum was still in an embryonic stage.

The WHAM strategy failed dismally due to the resilience and struggles of the people and their ability to master the art of clandestine organisation.

DEFINITION AND FUNCTIONS OF PTSAs

A PTSA is a representative school governance body comprising parents, teachers and students of a particular secondary school. At primary school level, a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) operates; the student component is excluded, presumably because students at that level are considered to be too young to get involved. The representation of different sectors within PTSAs and PTAs differs from school to school.

Parent representatives are not necessarily the parents of pupils enrolled at a particular school. Guardians or other members of the community with a vested interest in education and the general welfare of a school often serve as members of a PTSA. They may be either community-elected or seconded by community organisations such as civics or existing management councils. School principals are sometimes involved in an *ex-officio* capacity, and sometimes act as chairpersons of PTSAs; in some cases they do not participate in the PTSA at all. Teacher representatives are either elected directly by teachers or appointed from existing committees or the executive of school staff associations. Student representatives are either elected directly by the student body or appointed from the Students' Representative Council. Finally, sectors are either represented by an equal number of representatives per sector or disproportionately; for example, five parents, four teachers and three students.

PTSAs generally strive for certain aims and objectives (NECC/SACHED, 1993). Broadly speaking, these may include: furthering the educational aims of

the school within the community; inculcating a democratic approach to decision-making and problem-solving; fund-raising and monitoring the usage of school funds. These aims and objectives are normally drafted to suit the specific conditions of a particular school and community. Similarly, the method of operation of a PTSA depends largely on the material conditions of the school at which it exists.

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE STATE OF ORGANISATION OF PTSAs

The Organisation of PTSAs: the Current Balance Sheet

In December 1992, at the Sixth National Conference of the NECC, it was reported that 718 PTSAs and PTAs were operational. Recently, the NECC estimated that more than 2 500 PTSAs/PTAs were in existence by the end of March 1994, mostly in the Southern and Eastern Transvaal. Although this latest figure indicates a significant increase in the number of PTSAs, it is still negligible considering that there are approximately 23 000 schools in the country.

Another disturbing factor is that most existing PTSAs are beset by a number of serious inconsistencies, especially in terms of how they perceive and execute their role, functions and powers. Whereas PTSAs emerged as organs of people's power, charged with the crucial task of implementing people's education, most existing PTSAs are predominantly crisis-oriented, operating irregularly during the academic year.

The problems experienced by the PTSAs are of two basic types:

- those of an internal, organisational nature; and
- those arising from the context in which PTSAs operate.

Organisational problems

Many factors have had a harmful effect on the smooth organisation and operation of PTSAs. In 1993, the Natal Education Policy Unit identified 14 reasons that contributed to this state of affairs, of which 10 were general problems and four were problems specific to individual sectors constituting the PTSAs, i.e. parents, teachers and students. These problems are summarised below:

i) Lack of statutory and official recognition of PTSAs made it difficult for them to assert their authority.

ii) State education departments, including bantustan authorities, undermined

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the process of implementing PTSAs. In some rural areas chiefs were vehemently opposed to PTSAs, and especially to the participation of students in school governance.

ii) School principals saw PTSAs as eroding their administrative control; in particular, they resisted student participation.

iv) There was a lack of clarity about the rights, powers and functions of PTSAs and the respective roles that the different components should play.

v) The lines of accountability for PTSAs were blurred. There was uncertainty as to whether they were accountable to local communities, to local education co-ordinating committees (where they existed), or to the narrower school community.

vi) Student, teacher and community organisations often did not actively support the development of PTSAs even when they paid lip service to the PTSA concept. PTSA members often wore many organisational caps, and thus did not consistently give PTSAs sufficient attention (although they did bring valuable experience to the PTSAs).

vii) Lack of skills and expertise, especially in technical and professional matters, affected the efficient and effective running of PTSAs.

viii) PTSAs were under-resourced and most operated without funding.

ix) Meetings were poorly and inconsistently attended.

x) Parents who lacked relevant skills were often wrongly influenced and manipulated by school authorities (especially principals). In African communities, those parents with skills lacked enthusiasm to participate as many of them sent their children to schools outside the townships.

xi) Teachers were sometimes problematic: they did not want to attend meetings after hours; they tended to hold students in low esteem; in some cases they bought 'cheap popularity' with the students at the expense of taking a principled stand on issues.

xii) Uncompromising attitudes on the part of the students and misguided militancy were often interpreted as party political. Teachers and parents were also reluctant to involve students in 'sensitive' matters, especially the discipline of teachers. On the other hand, students sometimes expressed concern about an 'adult alliance' (i.e. parents and teachers) in the PTSAs.

xiii) Collective responsibility and democratic decision-making was undermined as various sectors or components of the PTSAs tended to promote narrow sectoral interests.

Problems arising from the context in which PTSAs operate

February 2, 1990 saw the beginning of a transition from apartheid minority rule to a Government of National Unity, which was elected in April 1994. Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the period between February 1990 and April 1994, there were a number of factors that militated against the organisation and operation of the PTSAs. During this period violence, especially in Natal and Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) escalated to unprecedented levels and its impact on schooling was severe. Repression in some of the bantustans substantially increased and students and teachers became prime targets.

One important factor was that after the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), the role of mass organisations became increasingly unclear, and the advent of the debate on civil society, in our view, exacerbated instead of resolved this confusion. Linked to this was an increasing gap between the dynamics of political negotiations on the one hand, and mass struggles (especially in the education sector) on the other. The regime was therefore able to shift the blame for the escalating crisis in education away from its own major unilateral restructuring exercises to the mass actions of teachers, students and other education sector organisations.

Another important factor was that policy development on a range of issues also became an epicentre of activity and struggle, and policy formulation increasingly became the domain of technocrats and experts, with less and less mass involvement. Policy development also became a major area of contestation; for example, the government released its Education Renewal Strategy (ERS), and at the same time the NECC published the research findings of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI).

Also at this time, donor agencies started to limit the type of activities they would support financially. Political work involving mass organisations was not seen as 'developmental' and therefore was not supported.

It is for these reasons that there was no significant quantitative and qualitative growth in the organisation of PTSAs during this period of relatively free political activity.

The Relationship between PTSAs and the NECC/LECCs

When it was established in 1985, one of the principal tasks of the NECC was to address the on-going and widespread crisis in education. PTSAs were seen

as the organisational machinery through which the day-to-day crises in schools could be dealt with, and therefore the responsibility for their organisation was located within the NECC. LECCs were established to facilitate implementation of the PTSA machinery.

However, at its 1989 National Conference, the NECC became a sector-driven organisation. What this meant was that the NECC decision-making structures were to be constituted by independent and autonomous organisations, which shared the same vision on national liberation and the transformation of education – namely COSATU, COSAS, SANSCO, NUSAS, SAYCO, UDUSA and SADTU[1] (then the National Teacher Unity Forum). The role of the NECC was to co-ordinate the programmes of the different sectors.

This posed two serious problems. The first was that the PTSAs and LECCs did not have a clearly defined constitutional status within the new NECC. Therefore, the relationship between the structures of the NECC and the LECC on the one hand, and PTSAs on the other, was unclear. Another problem facing PTSAs was that they often existed in areas where there were no local co-ordinating structures such as LECCs. This limited networking among PTSAs and the establishment of a uniform approach to school governance. Linked to this, the existence of LECCs without PTSAs (which occurs in certain areas) also gave rise to problems of accountability and mandates for PTSAs.

To remedy these problems, the recommendation of the EPU Natal (1993) that the NECC should establish LECCs and simultaneously organise PTSAs should be seriously pursued. Such an approach will require a movement away from a narrow sector-driven NECC, as well as clarification of the relationship between PTSAs and the NECC on the one hand, and the provincial and national education departments on the other.

The Relevance of PTSAs: Strengths and Future Prospects

Within the democratic movement, significance has been attached to the building and organisation of PTSAs, partly because of their inherent strengths, and

1. COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions
COSAS: Congress of South African Students
SANSCO: South African National Students' Congress
NUSAS: National Union of South African Students
SAYCO: South African Youth Congress
UDUSA: Union of Democratic University Staff Associations
SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers' Union

partly because of the commitment of the democratic movement to build and institutionalise participatory democracy at all levels of public life.

The strengths of existing PTSAs

Notwithstanding their weaknesses, PTSAs have also demonstrated a number of strengths that can provide important lessons for future models of education governance at institutional or school level. The EPU Natal Report (1993) notes the following strengths:

- Unlike the legitimacy crisis facing apartheid structures, PTSAs are legitimate and acceptable community structures that not only represent different interest groups at schools, but also afford them an opportunity to work together and to influence school policy by taking informed and democratic decisions.
- PTSAs have proved to be effective organs for conflict resolution, a process that can help to improve the relationship between parents, teachers and students.
- Different interest groups are able to monitor, manage and take decisions about the usage of school resources and funds, and can help to defuse a common source of conflict.
- Because PTSAs operate in a democratic and transparent manner, there is no fear of victimisation; thus issues of a controversial nature involving constituent members can be raised openly without prejudice.
- PTSAs can contribute to a more effective teaching and learning process in schools, as different sectors can contribute their unique experiences.
- Parental participation in the PTSAs brings important community dimensions into the PTSA and the school, and generally improves parental support of school projects and activities.
- Teachers' academic and administrative expertise and hands-on classroom experience assists parents to understand what is going on in the school. Through interaction with parents, teachers are able to understand students' backgrounds and the context of their work.
- Students, as beneficiaries of the learning process, play a crucial role in the ongoing evaluation of schools. Their representatives gain a sense of responsibility that is transmitted to their peers, to whom they relate with ease. Students also bring fresh and innovative approaches to school governance; PTSAs are, in fact, the product of students' demands.

Building and institutionalising participatory democracy

For decades the democratic movement has repeatedly stressed the view that democracy is not only about people voting for government once every four or five years, but that people should participate on a daily basis in decision-making processes in all aspects of their lives, including education. The Freedom Charter clause, 'The people shall govern,' was thus interpreted to denote that people and not only the government should govern. Later developments, especially in the mid-1980s, further consolidated this notion of democracy through the establishment of organs of people's power. Thus, PTSAs are regarded as an important grassroots formation that gives concrete expression to popular participation in the formulation and implementation of education policies and ensures the institutionalisation of participatory democracy.

PTSAs in a new system of educational governance

A number of indicators reveal that the democratic movement is unwavering in its commitment to the above understanding of democracy, and that the concept of PTSAs is still central to the transformation of education and the educational governance system in particular.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994:120–121) guarantees participatory and direct democracy. It categorically states that:

> Democracy for ordinary citizens must not end with formal rights and periodic one-person, one-vote elections. Without undermining the authority and responsibilities of elected representative bodies (the National Assembly, provincial legislatures, local government), the democratic order we envisage must foster a wide range of institutions of participatory democracy in partnership with civil society on the basis of informed and empowered citizens (e.g. various sectoral forums like the National Economic Forum) and facilitate direct democracy• (people's forums, referenda where appropriate, and other consultation forums).

Furthermore, in the field of education and training, the RDP calls for the establishment of:

> ...structures of institutional governance which reflect the interests of all stakeholders and the broader community served by the institution (RDP 1994:6).

The ANC Education Department (1994:26) goes a step further by explicitly and cogently arguing that:

> In principle, the governance of all schools should include parents, teachers and students (the latter at secondary level) as elected representatives of constituent groupings, together with representatives of the wider community served by the school ... The Principal would be an *ex-officio* member of the board.

It can be argued that the principle of inclusivity, which is a key element of the organisation and operation of PTSAs, is likely to be the cornerstone of the new system of educational governance. This conclusion is further reinforced by the Governance Task Team Report of the Implementation Plan for Education and Training (IPET), prepared by the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) on behalf of the ANC Department of Education. The Report (1994) recommended that institutional-level governance structures should be established, and that they be called either school boards or parent-teacher associations (or parent-teacher-student associations at further education level), depending on school preference.

An additional point to note is that, given the inherent strengths of the PTSAs as discussed previously, there is no doubt that PTSAs have succeeded against all odds in carving themselves a niche in the new system of educational governance.

In short, PTSAs are as relevant today as they were in the mid-1980s when they first emerged, precisely because we now have a democratically elected government that is committed to democracy, which was seen as a *sine qua non* for the substantial implementation of people's education for people's power.

CONCLUSION

By way of a conclusion, it is worth noting the following important points about the present state of organisation of PTSAs and their future prospects:

i) The emergence of PTSAs and their relevance today has been principally determined by the political and educational contexts within which they existed and still exist.

ii) The principle of inclusivity in the institutional educational governance structures must be entrenched in the future system of educational governance. Concerted struggles may be necessary to ensure this.

iii) For PTSAs to play a meaningful role, their present weaknesses must be thoroughly addressed and the appropriate actions taken.

iv) Clarifying the powers, functions, rights and corollary duties of PTSAs must

be done fairly quickly.

v) It is crucial that the relationship be clarified between PTSAs and mass organisations like the NECC/LECCs on the one hand, and the democratic state on the other. In other words, the question of whether PTSAs must be located inside or outside the state-prescribed mechanisms of school governance must be revisited.

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The Relationship between PTAs / PTSAs and the State

THULI DLAMINI AND BLADE NZIMANDE

1993

This paper outlines the range of options for a democratic governance structure in the public school, with particular reference to the relationship between PTSAs/PTAs and the democratic state.

CONTEXT

In considering the range of options for an alternative system of governance in education, three critical issues will co-determine the nature and functions of such a system in a democratic South Africa:

i) The legacy of governance: the historical apartheid governance structure and the ways in which its legacies will shape and undermine innovative and democratic initiatives of the future.

ii) The struggle for governance: the anti-apartheid governance structures created in the struggle for democracy, and the various lessons these experiences and struggles hold for reconstruction.

iii) The vision of governance: the democratic vision for governance articulated by education movements such as the NECC, and the steps required to fulfil that vision in education in the future.

These three critical issues will influence the nature of the envisaged relationship between the state and the PTAs/PTSAs.

ON THE LEGACY OF GOVERNANCE

It is accepted that the official system of governance in schools is repressive, authoritarian and anti-democratic. The culture of authoritarianism has

expressed itself through the different instruments of state governance, including the Inspectorate, School Management Councils and, not infrequently, through the school principalship. A democratic structure of governance will not change this culture radically, for the reality of permanent appointments, the shortage of qualified administrators, and the ingrained expectations of the schools' clients e.g. teachers, students and parents, will prohibit democratic change. This does not mean that democratic governance initiatives should not be launched – quite the contrary – but it does mean that such initiatives should be contextualised in the essentially conservative and reactionary legacy of apartheid governance.

ON THE STRUGGLE FOR GOVERNANCE

The apartheid state has never recognised PTSAs as legitimate structures. However, in the course of the struggle for PTSAs as legitimate school-based representative bodies, three outcomes have resulted. Firstly, there are democratic PTSAs which are linked to broader struggles for democracy and which have the trust and confidence of the community. Secondly, there are conservative PTSAs that define their agenda in very immediate terms (e.g. fund-raising) and are not linked to broader education struggles. Thirdly, there are non-existent PTSAs and in such areas the state either has complete control through its officially sanctioned bodies (e.g. Management Councils) or there is no local initiative to implement such a structure. It must be emphasised though, that through the struggles of the NECC and other mass organs, exemplary, effective and democratic PTSAs have been established, and these are experiences that should inform future initiatives.

ON THE VISION OF GOVERNANCE

It should be recalled that the struggle for democratic control of schools has been a principal objective of the education/political struggle. The vision of a community being actively involved in and responsible for school governance has energised much of the education struggle over the past 15 years. That vision will be blunted and attempts at subversion will invariably follow in the future, even where a new state ostensibly represents the demands of its constituency. Whatever the limitations and the legacy, this vision should continue to inform the ongoing struggle to make democratic governance a reality, long after a democratic government is installed.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PTSAs AND THE STATE

This article outlines three concrete models for the relationship between the state and the PTSAs, with the possible consequences associated with each model. The three models are not sacred, nor are they necessarily as clearly delineated in practice, but the idealised models presented below do work with different assumptions and suggest different consequences for democratic governance in education. Moreover, the models assist our understanding of the range of possibilities for educational governance.

Model A: The PTSA as an Organ of the State

In this model the PTSA is completely governed by and responsible to the state. The PTSA members are appointed by the state and they report, as a body, to the state. The state defines the scope of work and agenda of the PTSA, provides the requisite training for its effective working, and outlines clear lines of accountability to the PTSA as a body, as well as the individual sectors within it, e.g. the state draws up a code of conduct for students which is implemented through the PTSAs. The PTSA makes representations to the state when problems arise and the state decides how and whether to act on these representations. In its regular workings, the PTSA will not be involved in 'political' activities, but will make orderly representations to the state on issues political. The state, assumed to be democratic, will pay for all the activities associated with the PTSA including a nominal fee for individual members for their contribution to this governance structure.

Model B: The PTSA as an Organ of Civil Society

In this model the PTSA is completely independent of the state and accountable only to the local, regional and national networks of PTSAs which are constituted outside of the state, even though they are located within a state structure i.e., the school. All parents, students and teachers who are associated with a particular school democratically elect PTSA members. The local PTSA defines the agenda for action and, in conjunction with regional and national PTSAs, will jointly draw up codes of conduct and a framework for national action that will govern the activities of the local PTSA. The functions of the PTSA will incorporate political, educational and social activities. The PTSA, for example, will be actively involved in fund-raising activities for the school but it also reserves the right to decide on political action at the school level. In order to minimise state

interference, the PTSA is financially independent of the state and members contribute to the PTSA on a voluntary basis.

Model C: The PTSA as a Semi-autonomous Community Organ

In this model the PTSA has links to the state but is primarily accountable to the community it serves. The state finances the activities of the PTSA, including a national training programme for PTSA structures on issues ranging from 'how to run a meeting' to more complex concerns such as 'democratic administration'. While the state, as funder, could require certain responsibilities from the PTSA, those requirements are specific and limited. For example, the state could require that PTSAs provide a monthly budget of expenditure to the regional state education department or that PTSAs provide annual reports on activities. While the state has certain technical requirements for PTSAs to fulfil, the local PTSA, through its national and regional networks, will reserve the right to protest state decisions. For example, if the state is not delivering textbooks to the regions effectively or the demand for salary increases for teachers is not met, the PTSAs at local/regional/national levels can collectively and individually register their protest in various ways. Codes of conduct for the sectors will be compiled and legitimated through PTSA structures. PTSAs will be the school-level structures making representations to the state on issues such as unfair dismissals and teacher appointments. A PTSA member will serve, at the different levels, on state education department committees as a PTSA representative. There are areas in which the PTSA and the state education department will have joint duties, such as textbook selection for a particular region and teacher appointments in a particular school.

THE MODELS IN REVIEW

The critical question to resolve then, is the degree of distance between the state and PTSAs in a democratic society. Each model has certain advantages: Model A assures uniformity in the system and holds the state primarily responsible for governance; Model B recognises that a state elected on a democratic platform can rarely meet the demands of its constituency, and therefore allows for maximum independence; Model C ensures that the state is held responsible for its part of the governance deal but that the relationship is strictly a technical one that does not interfere with possible political action which PTSAs may need to embark on from time to time. But each model also has potential disadvantages:

Model A is a recipe for authoritarianism, while Model B may generate conflict rather than consensus *vis-à-vis* the state. Model C requires careful negotiations between PTSAs and the state to define which responsibilities belong to whom, and this may itself generate uncertainty, inconsistency and conflict.

But there is another flaw which each of the models may need to attend to. In certain regions some models may promote democratic governance, while others may inhibit such a goal. A strong PTSA in a conservative school region or area may in fact become an effective blocking mechanism for democratic initiatives from the centre. What this means is that any model proposal must also concern itself with consequences and not only with outward structure or form i.e., the degree to which a model works in practice depends on the specification of a number of conditions in the social context of model implementation.

Models are imaginative representations of an ideal situation. They cannot substitute for political mobilisation and must be subjected to scrutiny and the dilemmas of existing efforts to democratise school governance at the local level.

'Civil Society' and the Role of the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC)

BLADE NZIMANDE

1993

Although Nzimande specifically refers to the NECC and its role in relation to civil society and political organisations, this debate concerns organisations with a mass membership and the relationship they forge with government. Such organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that identify with the mass organisations of civil society continue to grapple with these same issues to the present day. Many struggle to provide support to South Africa's first democratic governments and their developmental programmes, while retaining a critical stance and perspective on government policy decisions and activities. Nzimande's discussion paper suggests ways in which organisations like school governing body associations can help build democracy in educational institutions in particular, and the education sector in general.

INTRODUCTION[1]

At least since the unbanning of organisations in February 1990, debates around the concept of 'civil society' have proliferated in South Africa. These debates have emerged largely due to a combination of factors, including the following:

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and other organisations within the context of a highly developed mass democratic movement that filled the gap created by the banning of these organisations.

The growing need to distinguish between mass and political organisations and to carve a distinct political space and identity for the respective organisations.

1 The original version of this paper was presented jointly with Thuli Dlamini at the NECC's national workshop, Johannesburg, 18–19 July 1992.

The collapse of Eastern European socialism and the subsequent reflections on the reasons for this collapse.[2]

It can be argued that all these factors have led to serious soul-searching within the broad democratic movement as to the nature and form our struggle should take. Over and above this, there is a growing debate on what the relationship should be between mass organisations on the one hand, and political organisations/parties on the other. Out of these debates has arisen an almost singular emphasis on the need to develop mass organisations as 'organs of civil society' as a basis for creating a vibrant, mass-based democracy, and in order to distinguish between mass and political organisations. According to some observers, this concept has become the major defining characteristic of mass organisations like the NECC and has been deployed to distinguish between mass organisations and political organisations like the ANC.

Concepts such as civil society have a long and specific history in Left and Marxist debates. It is felt here that the concept is increasingly being used quite uncritically and, therefore, it is important to examine it more closely, particularly in relation to the NECC. In the light of the above, the aims of this discussion paper are as follows:

- To undertake a brief but critical review of the different definitions and uses of this concept in contemporary South African debates and writings.
- To examine the question of the relationship between civil society and the state.
- To attempt a discussion on the consequences of the usage of such a concept on the nature, strategy and tactics of an organisation like the NECC.

In evaluating the concept of civil society, the following underlies the purpose of this paper:

The NECC is increasingly being seen as an organisation located within civil society. Both within the NECC and in the wider democratic movement, its future role is being defined as that of an organ of civil society, rather than an organ of the state. This paper aims to critically examine the implications of such a conceptualisation.

From a survey of the debates and literature on civil society, there seem to be a number of contradictory definitions of the concept. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to highlight these differences/contradictions in order to

2. See, amongst others, Joe Slovo's pamphlet, *Has socialism failed?* Inkululeko Publications, Johannesburg, 1990.

come up with a clearer understanding of the meaning of the concept.

A SURVEY OF SOME OF THE CONCEPTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

This survey illustrates the definitions various authors attach to the concept of civil society and its relationship to other institutions in society.

Seidman and Seidman

Seidman and Seidman (1992) define civil society as social organisations outside the state structure, excluding individually owned or corporate owned businesses or enterprises. It is interesting to note this exclusion, as this differs from other definitions. In further defining civil society, they warn that it cannot be entirely divorced from the state. To attempt this would be:

> ... the idealist dream that identifies free markets and free societies. That dream ignores the powerful elements of an economic oligarchy that, controlling access to essential resources, inevitably utilises 'free' markets to dominate and exploit the poor. Only in the ideal-type dream-world does civil society shed itself of state interference (1992:4).

Seidman and Seidman construct a strong separation between state and civil society. Despite the fact that they recognise some connection with the state, it is only in so far as state interference in civil society is concerned. The main contradiction in this definition of civil society is that while on the one hand they exclude corporate business from civil society, on the other, they use corporate business to illustrate the relationship between state and civil society. In other words, in this instance, they regard business corporations as being part of civil society.

Seidman and Seidman are quite forthright in their argument for a civil society. They say that a democratic government cannot be trusted on its own and, therefore, there is a need for non-state social formations to compel the state to be truly democratic. Whilst this is a legitimate concern, they nonetheless assume that such non-state social formations are inherently democratic and, therefore, are capable of pushing the state towards democracy. It is as if non-state social formations are democratic by virtue of being non-state. A lesson that Eastern Europe has taught us is that mass movements are not inherently democratic, nor are their actions always likely to result in democratic outcomes.

The manner in which Seidman and Seidman try to present non-state social

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formations as progressive also derives from their arbitrary inclusion and exclusion of certain formations as part of civil society. It appears that they exclude from civil society all those formations that are obviously reactionary (like business) and leave only those that have, in the past, been associated with democracy. The above reflects some of the main weaknesses running through most of the arguments of proponents of civil society.

African National Congress (ANC) Political Education Discussion Paper

This paper defines civil society as:

> ...all those parts of society that are not part of the state. This includes the privately owned parts of the economy, the media that is not owned by the state, cultural and social organisations, the churches, etc. (1991:2).

However, the paper warns that too strong a separation between civil society and the state, coupled with the notion that civil society will act as a watchdog on the state

> ...assumes that the ANC is not capable of democratising itself, and when it comes to power it will automatically be opposed to the democratisation of society (1991:9).

The ANC's concept of civil society differs from that of Seidman and Seidman (1992) in that it definitely includes business as part of civil society. It also emphasises that the notion of civil society is a heavily contested arena that includes exploitative and oppressive organs in society, as well as progressive social and political formations. Another strength of the ANC paper is that it does not make the theoretical mistake of equating civil society with mass organisations and the state with political organisations but, more appropriately, views the relationship as that between mass organisations and political organisations.

The weakness of the ANC paper is that it assumes too neat and simplistic a distinction between the state and civil society.

Sayed and Carrim

Sayed and Carrim (1992) define civil society as:

> ...an instance of an expansive integral state. This implies that civil society is a contested terrain that is not totally divorced from or uninfluenced by the state or is apolitical (1992:2).

Also stated is that the distinction between civil society and the state is pri-

marily intended to be methodological, rather than real or substantive. They argue strongly that it is more important to address the inter-relatedness of these two concepts than their separation within contemporary societies. This conception proposes a complex relationship between the state and civil society. In that sense, it begins to address some of the weaknesses of the other conceptions that define civil society primarily in terms of its distinction from the state. Even more significant, Sayed and Carrim insist that these two concepts must be dealt with simultaneously.

However, although this is the only paper that deals with the question of the NECC and civil society, it does not fully explore the implications of the inter-relatedness of civil society and the state for the NECC. In other words, what does it mean for the NECC to conceptualise the state and civil society as inseparable? If the distinction between the state and civil society is merely methodological and not substantive, can we then locate the NECC simply in civil society and not in the state, as they strongly suggest later in their paper?

One shortcoming of this paper is that whilst it sees civil society and the state as being inter-related, it does not deal with how this relationship should practically manifest itself in the politics of an organisation like the NECC. The authors deal with the NECC exclusively as part of civil society and not as part of what they call the 'expansive/integral state'. The problem with this is that it obscures the role the NECC can or should play in the sphere of the state. More importantly, it effectively obscures the state as a site of contestation and also obscures the role of the NECC in the wider contestation for state power or in the struggle for the transfer of power to the people.

If forces in the broad democratic movement are in agreement that the strategic objective of both the national liberation and mass democratic movements is the transfer of *power to the people*, then the key objective of our struggle should be power, with political power as the core. This does not mean that it is only political power that is crucial but it is a key issue in the whole equation of struggle and contestation. To simply locate the NECC in civil society does not define its role in the contestation of political power.

Some people will ask why the NECC should be concerned with the question of political power, since it does not regard itself as a future education department or as a political organisation/party. The answer must be sought in what is meant by the 'transfer of power to the people'. Having an ANC government may be an important step in the transfer of power to the people, but

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this in itself does not constitute such a transfer of power. Who are the people? The NECC is part of the people! Related to this is the fundamental question of what is meant by people wielding power. What form does this take? To simply equate the future education department with political power implies a bureaucratic conception of political power or the transfer of power to the people.

Despite their complex presentation of the relationship between the state and civil society, Sayed and Carrim's conception of the NECC is problematic. Firstly, they create a dichotomy and, in fact, an *opposition* between what they call 'immediatist' issues and what they dismiss as utopian, global and futuristic concerns. They argue that:

> Positive struggles of the NECC at the level of historicity, are no longer only redefining normative orders and cultural orientations in an anti-apartheid coalition, but are contesting these specifically in the educational domain... Fundamentally, these shifts from critical to positive struggles on all of these levels point to the specific nature of the issues at stake, the localised context within which they are to be implemented, and the immediatist nature of their application. This is opposed to the totalised nature of the context and issues that previously characterised the struggles of the NECC and their futuristic and utopian orientations (1992:7).

They strip the NECC of its political content, in addition to problematically suggesting that the NECC should not be concerned with wider issues of transformation but should confine itself to the education domain. This argument fails to relate sectoral struggles to the wider struggles for transformation. In fact, relating sectoral struggles to national struggles has been the driving force of the NECC as well as of the entire mass democratic movement. Sayed and Carrim's conceptualisation is actually the logical result of counterposing oppositional (anti-apartheid) struggles against struggles for transformation. This is a growing conception within the democratic movement: 'We must now move away from the politics of resistance to the politics of transformation', so the argument goes. In fact, this takes us back to where the NECC was prior to the struggle for people's education, which is problematic in a number of ways:

i) Whilst one can attempt a conceptual separation of these two processes, our struggle, particularly in the 1980s, makes this separation unrealistic, if not nonsensical, in practice. For instance, there is an inseparable relationship between 'resistance' and 'transformatory politics'.[3] To give an example, it

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was the struggle to make the apartheid system ungovernable that gave birth to organs of people's power.

ii) This conception also has the effect of reversing some of the most important advances (even in terms of organisational experience) made by the people in the struggle for democracy. Already in 1986, there were major advances in our struggles which connected both sectoral and wider political issues, as captured by Zwelakhe Sisulu (1986:107):

> The struggle for people's education can only finally be won when we have won the struggle for people's power.

iii) It is not true to say that the struggles of the NECC in the pre-February 1990 period were futuristic and utopian in character. These struggles were rooted in the education sphere, as illustrated by the concrete development of the whole discourse and practice of people's education: Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSAs), Student Representative Councils (SRCs), and the birth of the NECC itself. Over and above this, these struggles were firmly located within a perspective of wider political transformation. We would argue that it is still important that education struggles are concretely related to the wider struggles for social and political transformation.

Mayekiso

Mayekiso advances the notion of 'working class civil society' which appears, at face value, to be a theoretical advance that begins to grapple with the question of hegemony. Whilst recognising that civil society includes organs that serve the bourgeoisie, he suggests at the same time that for working class people, organs of civil society are unions, civics, and the like. This is a mistake that Mayekiso makes again and again. For working class people, organs of civil society include those that serve the bourgeoisie. It is dangerous for the working class to think of civil society as being divided into two: civil society for the working class and civil society for the bourgeoisie. Mayekiso's entire argument is based on this erroneous conception of a working class civil society. Other weaknesses in Mayekiso's paper are taken up in the discussion below.

3 The current resuscitation of student and teacher struggles around examination fees, teacher salaries and the demand for a national education forum has effectively shattered and exposed the shortsightedness of separating 'resistance' from 'transformation'.

ARE THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY SEPARATE?[4]

This is a key question given that civil society is, on the whole, counterposed to the state and is seen as a counter-weight to the ambitions of any state. An attempt to provide some crucial answers to this question is to be found in the assessment of Marx, Engels and Gramsci (Nzimande and Sikhosana, 1992A). For Marx and Engels in particular, the concept 'civil society' had a very specific historical and theoretical meaning. Firstly, Marx traces the birth of civil society to the advent of bourgeois society out of the 'ashes' of feudalism. For Marx, the birth of civil society belongs to modern (bourgeois) times, in that under feudalism, what people were in their private lives also defined their public political lives. In other words, serfs and other oppressed and exploited classes under feudalism were subject to constitutional subjugation, with the state and political office being reserved for the landed and property-owning classes.

The bourgeois revolutions that smashed the feudal order gave birth to civil liberties, and transformed the oppressed into 'equal' citizens alongside their old masters. According to Marx, there was real dualism between social and political life in feudal society, while in bourgeois society, there is abstract dualism. This means that whilst the separation between civil society and the state 'freed' the oppressed and exploited classes under feudalism, this was not real freedom. The creation of a civil society, the precondition for the creation of the modern proletariat, simply liberated the oppressed classes from one form of exploitation and led them to another. They were freed from the oppression of the land-owning classes, but were then delivered to the bourgeoisie as the working class, which resulted in a new, more sophisticated form of exploitation and oppression under the guise of civil society. In other words, civil society was the new form under which capitalist exploitation and the rule of the bourgeoisie was to be perpetrated. As Marx said:

> ... the [bourgeois] state does away with differences in birth, class, education, and profession in its own manner when it declares birth, class, education, and profession to be unpolitical differences, when it summons every member of the people to an equal participation in popular sovereignty... Nevertheless the state still allows private property, education, and profession to have an effect in their own manner, that is as private property, as education, as profession... (in McLellan 1977:30)

4. This section draws heavily on Nzimande and Sikhosana (1992).

Later, Marx and Engels began to conceptualise the state as the institutional expression of relations in civil society. By so saying, they were not collapsing the state and civil society into one, but made it clear that the separation between the two was both real and apparent. Concrete processes were in place to free the oppressed classes from feudalism and to create a citizenry, but at the same time, the state was the material and institutional expression of power relations in civil society. In other words, the separation between civil society and the state was simultaneously the expression of the rule of the bourgeoisie under new conditions of capitalist exploitation. Mayekiso's paper fails to understand this basic fact about the nature of civil society.

In this sense, therefore, the state and civil society cannot simply be seen as opposites but are a complex articulation of the rule of the bourgeoisie under modern conditions. Civil society is in fact a liberal concept, which expresses, strangely enough, the relative success of bourgeois ideology in separating these spheres. Its existence presupposes the existence of repressive and exploitative relations in society, whose political expression is the state. The separation between state and civil society has been the mode through which the working class continues to be exploited under capitalism. It is this separation which continues to reproduce the ideological basis for the subjugation of the working class and the conditions under which exploitation takes place under capitalism. Therefore, one cannot talk of the transformation of civil society into a working class or progressive civil society, but rather one must talk of the progressive aim of a fundamental transformation of society looking towards the abolition of the contradiction and the separation between state and civil society itself. This is the true meaning of socialist transformation for Marx and Engels.

The question of the relationship between state and civil society, as well as the debate around current usage of this concept is best summed up by Wood (1990) thus:

> ... the new concept of civil society signals that the left has learned the lessons of liberalism about the dangers of state oppression, but we seem to be forgetting the lessons we once learned from the socialist tradition about oppressions of civil society (1990:3).

IS THE NECC A SOCIAL MOVEMENT?

One of the outcomes of conceptualising the NECC as part of civil society is to argue that it is a social movement or vice versa. Usually organisations that are

regarded as being part of civil society are seen as social movements. This is based on the notion that political parties operate within the sphere of the state and social movements operate within the sphere of civil society. This separation is too neat, firstly because it might, in fact, suit an undemocratic government and an undemocratic political party that is in power in the sense that the state sphere is regarded solely as the terrain of political organisations. Secondly, mass organisations do in fact operate within the sphere of the state and they do form part of the wider contestation for state power. Prior to February 2 1990, the NECC made it clear that its struggle was about the transfer of (political) power to the people, hence the term, 'people's education for people's power'. Furthermore, the NECC was very clear about the fact that people's education will not be realised until there is transfer of power to the people, and the capture of state power by a democratic government. Therefore, it is dangerous to see the NECC as belonging to and operating in civil society only, unless the intention is to say that it was a mistake previously to see the NECC as part of the wider contestation for state power.

Thirdly, the notion of social movements has been abstractly transplanted from advanced capitalist countries to countries characterised by national oppression and imperialist domination. According to Was (1986), third world struggles tend to articulate four main contradictions: class, national oppression, imperialist domination and under-development. One can hasten to add gender here. Mass struggles tend to weld these contradictions together, giving them a revolutionary character which is aimed at the fundamental transformation of those societies. In advanced capitalist countries, mass struggles tend to be issue-based and social movements tend to be pressure groups. In third world countries, social movements tend to combine both political and social issues, as has been the case with the NECC. Similarly, national liberation movements are not only about state power, but are also about ordinary issues that affect people on a day-to-day basis. This tends to create a closer working relationship between national liberation and social movements. In fact, this closer working relationship becomes an imperative in the struggle for transformation and democracy.

This raises a number of questions: are we not conflating national liberation movements with social movements? Is the outcome of this conflation not going to turn mass organisations into transmission belts for political organisations?

5 See, amongst others, Saved and Carrim, 1992.

And are we not going to carry this over into a democratic South Africa? In many third world countries, and particularly in Africa, when a national liberation movement has become a government, relations between the government and mass organisations have not only become strained but the new government has either started attacking them or has attempted to turn them into its surrogates. Are we not going to fall into the same trap? These are, of course, legitimate questions, although the solution is not to create a simplistic separation between civil society and the state. In answering these questions the following issues need to be taken into account.

. The establishment of a democratic government does not overcome or resolve the contradictions of class, national oppression, gender, imperialist domination and under-development overnight. Although the relationship and articulation between these contradictions might change with the creation of a democratic state, the realisation of our goals in the struggle can only be achieved through close collaboration between a democratic government and the people as a whole. The key question, therefore, is how do mass organisations collaborate with a democratic state, while still remaining autonomous and critical of that state?

The main response to this is to say that mass organisations should be seen as primarily distinct from the state and belonging to civil society. Their role in this case would be to act as a watchdog to the state in order to build democracy and protect the autonomy of mass organisations. This stance is gaining wider currency within the democratic movement. However, the problems with this are that:

i) It leaves the area of the state uncontested. The terrain of the state is abandoned and left to the whims of the bureaucrats and capitalists (Nzimande, 1992b).

ii) The separation between the state and civil society is not neatly presented.

iii) It tends to conflate mass organisations with civil society and political organisations with the state. In fact, as argued above, political organisations do operate in civil society and mass organisations are part of the wider contestation for political and state power.

iv) Most of the goals of mass organisations cannot be achieved without state power being in the hands of the people and a democratic government.

v) It might lead mass organisations to see their role only as one of opposition to the state and rule out the possibility of a critical partnership.

THE NECC AS AN ORGAN OF PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND PEOPLE'S POWER

The argument counterposed to that of the NECC as an organ of civil society is that of seeing and developing the NECC as an organ of people's power and, specifically, an organ for people's education. This means that the NECC would simultaneously be concerned with the transfer of power – including state power – to the people, in addition to being an autonomous mass organ of the people in the sphere of education. The notion of the NECC as an organ of civil society tends to see the role of the NECC as narrowly concerned with pressurising the state to deliver what the people want. Of course, this is embodied in the notion of people's power, but is not limited to pressurising the state. Rather, it is concerned with diffusing power throughout the organs representing the mass of the people on the ground. This point is brilliantly captured by Mashamba (1990), in his reflections on the advance of our struggle in the mid-1980s:

> ... the dominance of the 'monolithic' notion of 'people's power' as 'the supreme controlling power in the state' which has to be seized by the people via the instrumentality of their leading organisations, the ANC and allied organisations – was superseded by a 'dispersed' notion of 'people's power' that has to be seized via the instrumentality of the various organs of people's power in each and every front of the struggle as a matter of both tactical and strategic priority. ... People's power is concerned with people's control of their lives in all respects – political, economic, cultural, educational, etc – on a continuous and local basis (1990:11–12).

In the former sense, power is narrowly seen as being concentrated in the state and the function of the NECC is to ensure that it is wielded correctly and for the good of the people. However that is not the meaning of people's power or the transfer of power to the people. The notion of organs of people's power is rooted in a very sophisticated understanding of the relationship between mass formations and state institutions. Contrary to the notion of organs of civil society, it argues against the reluctance for mass organisations to operate in the sphere of a democratic state, while at the same time not being subjected to the apparatuses of the state. It is in this way that democracy is ensured, not through distancing oneself from the democratic state. This, of course, presupposes strong mass organisations that will ensure that power is effectively transferred to the people and not to a government that controls the state apparatuses.

In order to fully understand the relationship between these two conceptualisations, it is important to pose these issues in concrete and practical terms. However, one cannot readily read off practical implications or consequences from theoretical statements or propositions. Conversely, theoretical positions are the basis upon which concrete action is taken. For this reason, the way the NECC conceives of itself is very important in determining its organisational structure, strategy and tactics.

If the NECC is to be regarded as an umbrella organisation of the PTSAs/PTAs, it is necessary to reflect on their nature and role. PTSAs/PTAs should be regarded – as they are by the NECC and the entire democratic movement involved in education – as the basic organs for people's education at school level. Posing the question of whether PTSAs/PTAs are to be regarded as organs of civil society or as organs of the state misses the point entirely. Seeing PTSAs/PTAs purely as organs of civil society will mean, in practice, that the state will need organs of school governance at local level, with PTSAs/PTAs as civil society organs acting as a check against state organs of school governance. On the other hand, seeing PTSAs/PTAs simply as organs of the state means that they will be bureaucratic mechanisms through which education is delivered to the people, which is problematic. The notion of PTSAs/PTAs as organs of people's power, however, defines them as organs of school governance at the local level as well as autonomous mass formations that are able to act independently of the state apparatuses. This can be ensured if PTSAs/PTAs are rooted in their mass-based constituency and continually receive their mandate from this constituency.

Proponents of organs of civil society would argue that if PTSAs/PTAs are to operate as local structures of governance, they would become bureaucratised and cease to be autonomous, mass-based formations. This, they would argue, would be because of the inherently bureaucratic character of the state. Seeing PTSAs/PTAs as organs of people's power would be based on the argument that though there is always a danger of such organs losing touch with their mass constituency and becoming conduits for state bureaucracy, this is not inevitable. It is through organs of people's power that the state can be forced to relate to mass power on the ground.

We should, however, be under no illusion that for the NECC to be an umbrella organisation for PTSAs/PTAs, and at the same time for these structures to be governance structures at school level is not without its problems and

potential contradictions. For example, there would be a number of potentially conflicting pressures on them from both their mass constituency and from state apparatuses. However, suggesting PTSAs/PTAs should only be organs of civil society – as proponents of civil society tend to do – effectively marginalises them and bureaucratises governance at school level, the very opposite of what proponents of civil society want to achieve.[6]

CHALLENGES FACING THE NECC

I am under no illusion that the possibility of ensuring such a role for mass formations is dependent upon the process of social and political transformation in the country. If the transformation is shallow and merely replaces the apartheid bureaucratic elite with an ANC bureaucratic elite, then the possibilities for such a role for democratic mass formations are limited. The only way to guarantee a thoroughgoing transformation is to develop organs of people's power now. The NECC should embark on a process of creating such organs throughout the education terrain.

The most urgent question facing the NECC in the present circumstances therefore, is how to embark on the rebuilding of organs of people's education. In order to begin to answer this question, we must fully understand how the post-February 1990 conjuncture has changed the terrain of struggle. One of the key strategies of the apartheid regime in this period has been to depoliticise and institutionalise mass struggles, mainly by attempting to disconnect them from the major political issues of the day. This has been done by limiting political transformation to the constitutional negotiations process, thus severing direct links with the mass struggles which sustained the struggle for democracy in the 1980s. By so doing, the regime hopes to relegate civic, educational, and cultural struggles to the sphere of civil society proper, along the lines of the advanced capitalist countries. In this way they try to distance the national liberation movement from the day-to-day struggles of the people, thus creating a gulf between the ANC and the mass democratic movement. The proponents of civil society are playing into precisely this!

The regime also tries to achieve this objective by creating multiple negotia-

6. This could be the potential outcome of the governance structure as suggested in the systems perspective of the NEPI report, where PTSAs/PTAs are merely pressure organisations outside of school governance structures (NEPI, 1992).

tion fora on various sectoral issues, thereby locking the democratic movement into institutional negotiation processes that remove the struggle from the streets, factories and townships. The end result is that instead of our demands being formulated through struggles on the ground, they are being formulated around the table. What we should be doing is creating organs of people's power and also strengthening those that have already been created by the people on the ground, for example, PTSAs/PTAs; people's education activities; dual power; and so on.

Fortunately, we have entered a period which re-opens possibilities for rebuilding these organs of people's power. This can be done by creatively transforming the current mass action into sustained mass struggle whose objective is the creation of organs of people's power in all social and political spheres. This would transcend the current strategies of the national liberation and democratic movements of using mass action like a tap that can be turned on and off to create pressure in the negotiations process.

All the above have particular implications for the structure of the NECC. Some of the more specific challenges facing the NECC in this period and beyond can be highlighted.

Firstly, the NECC is part of the wider contestation for state power, and specifically the transfer of power to the people, but at the same time it is rooted in the education sphere. The key challenge here is to weld education struggles with the wider political struggles without losing the specific focus on education struggles. This can only be done if the perspective of the NECC is firmly located within the perspective of the *national democratic revolution*. This perspective is based on the reality that national democratic transformation will only come about if sectoral struggles are deepened and conducted democratically. At the same time, the realisation of people's education will only be made possible by the most thorough national democratic transformation. It can be argued that this perspective goes beyond the narrow conception of organs of civil society as demonstrated above.

Within this context, this would mean the development of a sophisticated relationship between the NECC and the national liberation movement, particularly the ANC and the tripartite alliance. It would be a relationship based on maximum unity without subsumation into any specific political organisation. The conception of the NECC as an organ of civil society only focuses on the autonomy of the NECC and does not adequately grapple with the important

question of unity within the national liberation struggle. The national democratic revolution is not the property of the political components of the national liberation movement only, but is the responsibility of the entire democratic movement, with the ANC as the leader.

Secondly, the NECC has the task of welding together its sectoral components and mediating between, and exercising leadership over, the various interests of these components. The NECC must do this in such a manner that it is not reduced to the struggles of this or that component, but is able to drive an overarching mass-based struggle for people's education. This is important given the fact that there are potential conflicts of interest between the various components, arising out of the fact that they occupy different positions in the power structures of the educational system.

Thirdly, the biggest challenge to the NECC, and all mass organisations for that matter, is that of building a truly *participatory democracy* in a democratic South Africa. The constitutional negotiations at the moment are largely about creating formal structures of representative democracy. Important as this may be, there is a grave danger that the debate around the struggles to build and institutionalise participatory democracy may be lost. It is within this framework, for instance, that the issue of the role and location of PTSAs/PTAs should be approached. Without consciously struggling for the creation and institutionalisation of participatory democracy at all levels, mass organisations can easily become marginalised. Representative democracy on its own, no matter how well it is entrenched, is deformed democracy. In order to achieve this, one requires a powerful mass organisation that is able to relate intra-educational struggles, as articulated by the various components (teachers, students, parents and workers), to the wider national liberation struggle.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

No doubt, the emergence of the concept of civil society within South Africa's democratic movement has helped to sharpen our focus on the issue of the relationship between political organisations and mass formations, state and non-state formations, as well as the importance of building democracy in South Africa. However, the resuscitation of the concept of civil society should not obscure the damage that it could do in understanding the role of the state in building democracy in South Africa. In the African context – post-colonial countries in particular – the state has played a significant role and one can

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already see the seeds of such a trend in South Africa. Despite the increasing focus on the nature and role of civil society in building democracy, documents of the very same so-called 'organs of civil society' are littered with declarations, programmes and resolutions that a democratic state should play a leading role in economic development, housing, education, health, affirmative action, and virtually every sphere of social and political life. In other words, all the signs are pointing towards the emergence of an *over-developed post-apartheid state*. Yet theorists of civil society have very little to say about the nature of the state to be developed in order for South Africa to be democratic.

Therefore, the question of the state and its role in the democratic process should not be argued indirectly via conceptions of an 'independent and vibrant civil society', but should be engaged directly. Conceptualisations of mass organisations should be firmly related to the question of the state and state power.

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Student Representative Council members survey a damaged classroom at KwaNdengezi–May 1991.
Photo: Rafs Mayet.

III THE UNFOLDING OF A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE DEBATE

In the wake of the 1990–92 National Education Policy Investigation initiated by mass-based organisations and the National Party government's Education Renewal Strategy, the restructuring of the education system became a highly contested and widely debated issue. Several papers written during this period cast EPU policy analysts as both educators explaining to an activist audience the key and contending positions of the Investigation and the Strategy and as advocates of a particular configuration for democratic governance. Although student participation was central to earlier papers on PTSAs, the paper commissioned by the Hunter Committee thoroughly argues the case. While the paper on learning spaces predates the South African Schools Act, it marks a point when the major issues of democratic governance structures were no longer being contested and attention could be shifted to policy implementation and implications.

Towards a New Structure for the Governance of Schooling

BLADE NZIMANDE, JOHN PAMPALLIS, THULI DLAMINI, AND MICHELE BERGER

1993

This paper was commissioned by the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) and presented at a workshop in March 1993. It is the first paper coming out of the EPU after the publishing of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Governance Report and an early draft African National Congress (ANC) policy framework, and attempts to reconcile principles and governance issues as they emerge in the draft policy framework and an ANC regional policy document, in particular concerning the centralisation-decentralisation debate. Written on the eve of negotiations that led to South Africa's political settlement and compromise, this paper formulates tentative proposals for educational governance by a new government.

INTRODUCTION

What structures and system of school governance should be put in place in order to create a truly non-racial, non-sexist and democratic system of education in South Africa? In answering this question we were guided by the ANC policy document, the NEPI report on governance and a critique of the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS). We also found the principles enunciated in the ANC Regional Policy document (1992), a useful framework within which to develop structures of school governance and a useful supplement to those enunciated in the education policy documents. In particular, these principles were useful in dealing with the question of the ANC's approach to regionalism and how this could affect the structure of education governance in future. However, it is also important to point out that one of the difficulties in dealing with the struc-

ture of governance is the question of what powers, duties and functions will be devolved to the regions and the place of education within these. There is, for instance, a possible disjuncture between the policy documents of the Education Department and those of the ANC's policy on regions. The education policy anticipates a much stronger unitary structure of governance of education, whilst the document on regional policy provides for much more decentralisation. The regional policy document states, amongst other things, that:

> ...education, health, housing, employment, transport and economic development, all have to be conducted both at national and subnational levels within a single national policy framework. Governmental structures will be organised such that regions will participate fully in the formulation of policy. The issue is not how to separate out exclusive competence for one level as against the other, but how to ensure appropriate responsibility and accountability at each level, and the harmonious interaction of all levels. (ANC, 1992:4).

Although it is difficult to know exactly what the outcome of constitutional negotiations is going to be on this issue, we have tried to incorporate regionalism within the framework of what the ANC document suggests.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

In undertaking this task, we found it important to consciously spell out the conceptual and political framework within which we are working. Although it was not possible to outline and anticipate all the issues, particularly those relating to the major political and constitutional issues, the following informed our approach in developing the structure of school governance:

i) As per the education policy document: *the ANC believes in democratic participation, not only in the development of policy in education, human resources and science and technology, but in the administration and management of institutions in these fields. We are committed to the establishment of relevant structures for such participation* (ANC, c.1992). Within this context mass organisations should play an important role in the governance of education.

ii) Given the history of the lack of participation by communities, especially black communities, in the affairs of education, it is important that structures that would facilitate the participation of communities at grassroots level are created.

iii) As explained above, a unitary system of education should be created which

will ensure the balance between national co-ordination and policy development and participation at the same time. This should be located within a policy of bringing government closer to the people.

iv) The structure of governance in education should aim at ensuring that redress of past imbalances is placed at the top of education restructuring.

v) The structure of any system of governance of schooling should aim at nation building and the complete destruction of any system based on tribalism, ethnicity and racial considerations.

vi) Given the possibility of a power-sharing arrangement in an interim government of national unity and subsequently a government of national unity and reconstruction, everything possible should be done to ensure that any future education ministry should be in the hands of the ANC.

THE EDUCATION RENEWAL STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

The ERS pays very little attention to issues of governance – its conception of governance is that:

> Since the school should be a natural extension of the parental home, the necessity of parent involvement is emphasised. This can best be ensured by giving parents a meaningful say in the management of school affairs (DNE, 1992:10–11).

Underpinning this approach is a very authoritarian and paternalistic conception that it is parents, as guardians, who should play a role in governance of schooling. This radically differs from the conceptions of the democratic movement, whose struggles have also been around democratic and equal participation of teachers, parents and students at the secondary level, in the governance of schooling.

Related to this, the ERS seems to regard the involvement of parents in governance of schooling more as a means to finance schools rather than as an objective in itself. The ERS seems to be shifting funding responsibilities to the communities. Communities will be given more power, so that more money can be elicited from them. In other words, more affluent communities will have greater power. This also differs from our own conception where democratic governance and involvement of all sectors is an objective in itself. Furthermore the democratic movement regards such participation as a necessary condition for efficient running of schools as well as devolving decision-making powers.

The conception of school governance in the ERS is still firmly located within the notion of differentiated models of school governance. Three models are suggested:

- State schools under the direct control of the state
- State-supported schools under the control of a management council representative of the parent community
- Private schools that enjoy a very high degree of management autonomy (DNE, 1991:10).

These models seem to be based on the current unilateral restructuring of education where white state schools are effectively being semi-privatised. This assessment is strengthened by the fact that the ERS does not indicate which schools are going to be run under which model. This is a crucial issue for the democratic movement, since it is desirable, as will be argued later, that for state schools there should be a single model of governance in order to ensure that the overriding principle of democratic participation is enshrined in any future structure of governance. The ERS gives more detailed consideration to those functions of management councils currently being practised under the Model C arrangement, and no attention is given to the situation in black schools regarding governance.

In fact, the ERS models on governance are primarily structured around questions of finance and securing education for whites even in a new dispensation. This is summarised in the ERS itself thus:

> In order to decentralise ... management councils would have to be invested with a considerable degree of financial autonomy ... In this regard the establishment of the so-called Model C school with the DEC ... brought particularly important principles and experiences to the fore. This initiative could be used as a basis for the establishment and effective functioning of management councils and the obtaining of community involvement at schools (DNE, 1992:81).

This is, in fact, racist unilateral restructuring that is carefully couched in the language of democratic governance of schooling.

THE NEPI REPORT ON GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The NEPI report (1992) presents what are essentially two perspectives on governance and these are not necessarily options in the strictest sense of the word.

These perspectives are referred to as 'the system perspective' and 'the school governance perspective'. They are best summed up in the NEPI report itself thus:

> The first begins from the macro-perspective of system change and focuses on the structures and processes required to render the whole system more democratic and accountable. The second begins from the micro-perspective of school governance and takes as a starting point the NECC's commitment to expanding the role of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) in the governance of the system. Neither perspective avoids consideration of either macro- or micro-issues, but each one starts from a different position (NEPI, 1992:38).

However, what is most distinct about these approaches is the fact that whilst the systems approach is primarily concerned with the central role that should be played by government structures in education, the school governance approach is primarily driven by considerations of the inclusion and role that should be played by mass organisations outside of governmental structures. We regarded these as representing two extremes. Our approach towards structures of governance was concerned with the accountability of governmental structures to the electorate whilst at the same time finding a central role for mass organisations. We were concerned about the fact that whilst mass organisations should not be marginalised, at the same time they cannot substitute for structures that have been elected by the electorate. Our proposal was trying to deal with the reality of combining representative and participatory democracy. The systems approach is strong on structures of governance, based largely on representative democracy, whilst the school governance approach tries to entrench a very strong representative democracy.

PROPOSED STRUCTURES OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The following represents what we consider to be the most appropriate structures of school governance from national to school level.

National Level

At national level a national education department should be created which, through the government of the day, is accountable to the National Assembly. The principle underlying the structure of the new education department should be that the provision of education is the responsibility of the state. The

main functions of the national education department should be the following:

- The development of overall national education policy, as well as ensuring that such policy is adhered to right from national to school level.
- The development of a national core curriculum and the supervision of its implementation. Such a curriculum should have flexibility to allow regional variations within the context of overall national policies on the curriculum. Such flexibility should allow for inclusion of aspects of the curriculum that should take into account regional varieties, needs and interests.
- The drawing up of the national education budget and the total financing of education, taking into account regional disparities and inequities. The national education budget should be compiled in consultation with regional governments or administrations.
- The development and supervision of structures of redress to progressively work towards the elimination of disparities created by apartheid. The overall goal here should be the elimination of racial, ethnic and gender imbalances in the education system.
- The creation of a unitary education system and a single system of education throughout the country. In performing this task the national education department should be able to ensure that regions adhere to the overall national goals and objectives. In this regard the national education department should have overriding powers over the regions.
- In performing its duties the national ministry of education should at all times consult with a national forum. This is particularly important on matters relating to the budget, financing of education and curriculum development.

Through the above powers and functions the national education ministry should aim to achieve four main objectives:

- Deracialisation and elimination of gender based discrimination in education
- Creation of a common national identity
- Creation of new boundaries in education
- Equalisation and redress

In order to ensure participatory democracy at national level in the running of education, a National Education Forum should be created. This Forum should be made up of representatives of sectoral and national mass organisations that have an interest in education. Other appropriate organisations and structures such as business and trade unions should be represented in this Forum. The overriding principle of representation in this Forum should be that all those

organisations that have a strong interest in, and are structured around, educational issues, should be represented. The ministers and top officials of the national education ministry should sit in this Forum in an *ex-officio* capacity. The role, powers and functions of the National Education Forum should be the following:

- To be consulted and comment on the national education budget before it is submitted to the National Assembly for approval.
- To participate in and comment on the process of curriculum development.
- To participate in and be consulted on the process of the formulation of the overall national education policy.

The relationship between the national education ministry and the National Education Forum should be that whilst the Forum should be consulted on all major policy matters and the budget, such Forum should not have decision-making powers. The Forum can recommend to the ministry on all matters affecting education. This is to ensure that the national education ministry is ultimately accountable to the electorate through the National Assembly.

The funding of the national education ministry should be voted in a special education budget in the National Assembly. In order to ensure that participatory democracy is institutionalised at the highest levels, the financial requirements for the proper functioning of the National Education Forum in running its own affairs should be directly provided by parliament. Whilst this should be considered as part of educational spending, it should be given separately from the general education budget. Such funds are going to be very small indeed. They should primarily cater for administrative and research functions of the forum. Such mechanisms for funding the forum will ensure the commitment of the national assembly to participatory democracy and will also protect the autonomy of the forum. Nevertheless, the strength and power of persuasion of the forum will depend on the strength of the organisations represented in that forum. A high degree of mass mobilisation and grassroots membership of these organisations will ensure that the voice of the forum is taken seriously. The composition of the forum should be entirely left to structures and organisations engaged in matters of education, although the national assembly, through the ministry, may initially invite a wide range of organisations to form such a forum.

In the light of all the above, it is important that some key positions that should be immediately taken over in the new education administration be identified. Although the key functions of these positions will, to a large extent,

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depend on the detailed implementation of the above structures, some of the key positions are already identifiable.

The main problem and concern here is how to get rid of apartheid bureaucrats from the key positions. This can be done in a combination of ways. The first is through immediate restructuring of key functions and appointing new heads for the new structure. This should be combined with early retirement or lateral transfer of some of the functionaries of the apartheid bureaucracies.

Regional Level

The regional level is likely to be the trickiest level of educational governance. The nature of education at regional level will largely be dependent on the final duties, powers and functions of regional government in a new dispensation. We have assumed here a rather unitarist framework of education, where overall education policy is determined at national level and regional education authorities are primarily concerned with administration of education. Regional authorities will only be involved in macro-policy issues on specified matters reserved for regional governments. It is difficult to provide exact details at the moment. It might be useful that a detailed study will have to be undertaken to develop various models of educational governance based on possible scenarios of the relationship, powers and functions of both national and regional governments. This sphere is also likely to be a heavily contested one in view of the determination of all enemies of national liberation to create federalism or exceptionally strong regional government.

Regional education authorities

Each region shall have its own regional educational authority, which should have dual accountability in case there are elected regional assemblies. Each region shall have a political head of the education authority. This political authority shall have the powers to appoint the regional education administration, which shall operate within the national education policies. For purposes of implementing education policies the regional education authority shall be accountable to the national education department, particularly on those matters regarded as belonging to the sphere of the national education ministry. We see this as the only way through which transformation and administration of education shall take place. Completely independent education authorities to the regional level will severely compromise the capacity of the national education

ministry to implement and supervise a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic system of education.

In each region an education forum will be established along similar lines to the National Education Forum. The powers and functions of the regional education forum shall be the following:

- To be consulted in the development of the regional budget before its submission for approval by the regional assembly.
- To participate and comment in the development of regional education policy in those areas specified for the regional education authority.
- To be consulted on matters relating to curriculum development for the region.

The regional education forum shall have only advisory powers and make recommendations to the regional education authority. Like the national education forum, the regional education authority shall be an *ex-officio* member of the forum. The strength of the forum will depend on the strength and the capacity of the various organisations represented to mobilise. The regional education forum shall be financed directly by the regional assembly.

An issue that requires attention here is that of the relationship between the regional education authority to the national ministry on the one hand, and to the regional assembly on the other hand. The final relationship will depend on the final constitutional package that emerges out of the transition process. It is already clear that federalism or regionalism as seen by the Nationalist Party will not be in the interests of educational restructuring in South Africa.

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Restructuring the Education System: Debates and Conflicts

JOHN PAMPALLIS

1993

In this paper, published as an Education Monitor in October 1993, Pampallis outlines developments in the national struggle to democratise education in South Africa. He was writing at a time when multi-party negotiations were in progress and there was a shift in educational strategies from protest and opposition to negotiated settlements. Commenting on the apartheid regime initiating unilateral restructuring of the education system, he asserts the need to redress inequalities and introduce democratic governance. The tension between representative and participatory democracy is briefly explored.

In the past three and a half years, politicians, educationists and academics have held numerous meetings and published various documents to discuss ways to restructure the education system in South Africa. Sharp differences have arisen between the various participants, notably between those organisations associated with the mass democratic movement and those who were associated with the apartheid system. At the same time though, some areas of agreement have also emerged.

The aim of this paper is to summarise some of the most important issues arising from these debates. In particular, it focuses on the area of school governance – that is, the question of how the school system should be controlled and who should control it. This area is crucially important because the system of governance provides the overall framework in which decisions will be made for other important areas of education, including curriculum and language policy, examinations, certification, support services, and other areas.

We hope that this discussion will allow those who have not been able to follow all the debates so far, to better understand the main differences between the

various parties. This should help them to evaluate new policy proposals and to understand the context in which they are put forward. Hopefully, it will also help people to participate in the debates themselves.

CHANGING STRATEGIES

Since the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other organisations in February 1990, it has become clear that the struggle to determine the future of South Africa has taken on new forms. The ANC has suspended the armed struggle; mass struggles continue to play a role – for example, in the protests following Chris Hani's assassination and in the mass action by teachers and students in mid-1993 – but they have come to play a less central part than was the case in the pre-1990 period. The process of negotiations has now come to play a key role in the ANC's strategy of struggle.

The De Klerk government has also made significant moves over the past two years. Although there is evidence that the security forces have continued to be engaged in violence aimed at destabilising and weakening the liberation movement, the state has repealed most of the oppressive and discriminatory apartheid laws and is now negotiating a transition to democracy with the liberation movement.

These changes have brought the whole area of policy development to the forefront in the struggle to shape the future of South Africa. The National Party (NP) has been busy putting together new policies which it hopes it will be able to sell to the liberation movement, but which will effectively result in the maintenance of white privileges. The broad liberation movement operated for a long time in a situation where the struggle to end apartheid was more crucial than planning for a post-apartheid society. It has now had to re-position itself and develop policies for a wide range of areas: the economy, the media, policing, the post-apartheid armed forces, the status of various languages, health, welfare, science and technology, and education, among others.

UNILATERAL RESTRUCTURING

The state has an advantage in any negotiations to restructure a new education system. The reason for this is that it controls the education system at present and is in a position to make changes that will promote the type of education system that it wants to create in the future. The government is, in fact, making use of this advantage by engaging in what is often referred to as 'unilateral restructur-

ing' – so called because the government undertakes it without consulting its negotiating partners or the democratic movement in general, and usually does not have their approval for the changes.

One example of this unilateral restructuring is the conversion of almost all the former white schools into 'Model C' schools. This decreased the state subsidy to these schools, forcing parents to pay much higher fees, but in return giving them ownership of the physical property of the schools and control over some of the hiring and firing of staff, admissions policy, the setting of school fees and raising of other funding for the schools. Thus, wealthy communities are given the opportunity to maintain their schools as privileged institutions – with state subsidies – as long as the communities contribute financially.

The government and the NP, it appears, hope that in this way they can maintain a privileged sector within the school system which most whites would attend in the future. They would be joined by a gradually increasing black middle class, thereby legitimising a class-divided education system by making it apparently non-racial. The majority of blacks would continue to have a second-class education.

In general, the policy of unilateral restructuring is aimed at securing the privileged sector of the education system, but not at improving the underprivileged sector or resolving the education crisis. The problems of black schooling are largely ignored, being left to a future government to deal with. Restructuring affects black education mainly in such areas as the retrenchment of teachers, where the education offered is being negatively affected.

Not surprisingly, unilateral restructuring has angered the democratic movement. It sees this restructuring as an attempt by the NP to entrench certain undemocratic features in the education system just before a democratic state comes into being. During the student boycotts and the teachers' strikes in May 1993, a central demand was for an end to unilateral restructuring of education by the government. An additional demand was for the establishment of a forum where education and training could be discussed and restructuring decisions could be made jointly by all major stakeholders in the education process.

Under pressure from teacher and student protests, as well as from its political opponents, the De Klerk regime agreed to the establishment of the National Education and Training Forum (NETF), which was formally launched in August 1993. The government has undertaken to stop unilateral restructuring, but nevertheless still appears to be continuing with it. For example, the

Department of National Education (DNE) set up syllabus committees earlier this year, with the aim of completely rewriting the curriculum within the framework provided by the government's *Curriculum Model for South Africa* (see below).

In some regions, for example in Natal, attempts are being made to establish regional forums made up of all the significant stakeholders in the region. Such forums could consider, among other things, the restructuring of education in the regions.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Apart from taking such practical steps as these to restructure the education system, the state has also been developing its ideas on the type of education system that it wants to see in the future. These ideas have been made known in a number of publications by the government in the past two years. These include:

- *The Education Renewal Strategy: Discussion Document* – June 1991, and the *Education Renewal Strategy* – November 1992.
- *A Curriculum Model for South Africa: Discussion Document* – November 1991.
- *Investigation into a National Training Strategy for the RSA* – 1991.

In addition, another document reflecting the thinking of important sections of the education sector is the *Report of the Natal-KwaZulu Working Group 1992*. This document was produced by the Natal Education Board and is the product of a committee consisting of senior representatives of the five education departments operating in Natal (i.e. the Department of Education and Training, and the Departments of Education and Culture in KwaZulu and in the Houses of Assembly, Delegates and Representatives). Its mandate was to develop a 'plan for the unification of the separate departments in Natal-KwaZulu'. In doing this, it did not involve or even consult stakeholders outside the state education departments; this is clearly a plan for unilaterally restructuring the schooling system in Natal-KwaZulu.

The democratic movement has also been busy with policy development. The first major policy document to emerge from the democratic movement was the 13-volume *National Education Policy Investigation* (NEPI, 1992). This study was commissioned by the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) and compiled by a team of over 200 researchers, mainly volunteers. Since then, the ANC has helped establish the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). The CEPD, while remaining independent of the ANC, is helping the

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ANC to develop a comprehensive education policy.

In addition, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has also been active in education policy development, particularly with respect to promoting adult education and integrating training and the formal education system. COSATU has collaborated actively with both the ANC and CEPD in this regard. An important document to emerge from this collaboration is a working paper called *A Framework for Life-Long Learning* which calls for an integrated approach to both formal and non-formal education and training so that people can move from one to the other while retaining recognition for any qualifications obtained.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH

Redressing Inequalities and Injustices

The government's documents show a shift in government thinking since the days of 'pure' bantu education. The government has had to realise that the old system cannot be sustained, either in education or in any other sphere. It is thus involved in a process of what could be called 'damage limitation' – trying to maintain as many white privileges as possible within a system which appears to be non-racial. This can only be done by, to some extent, tying white interests to those of a black middle class – in other words, drawing the black middle class into the privileged environment previously occupied exclusively by whites.

In its attempt to appear democratic and non-racial, the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) says that race should not feature as a factor in the structuring of education. Despite this, it makes no provision for any redress of the historical injustices and inequalities of apartheid. So, while the government says that there should be equality of opportunity, the institutional framework that it proposes is one that obviously favours those with the wealth to subsidise their children's education.

The 1992 version of the ERS talks about the 'elimination of backlogs in education'. However, this phrase – probably thought up in response to criticisms that the first ERS did not take into account the legacy of apartheid – does not mean what the liberation movement does when it talks about 'redress'. It refers only to spreading the minimal educational provision to those who at present have none.

Today, the main area of difference between the government and the democratic movement is on whether there should be policies aimed specifically at the redress of historical injustices and inequalities arising from such injustices. The ANC, NECC, PAC and AZAPO have all criticised the ERS documents on this point specifically.

One of the main ways in which this is played out is in the centralisation-decentralisation debate in which differences in education policy reflect the different positions in the constitutional negotiations. The ANC alliance is aiming for a strong central government while the government and some others seek a decentralised, federal system.

Where Should Power be Located?

Both the [National Party] government and the democratic movement agree that the central state, the regional or local authorities, as well as individual school communities should have some level of influence over education. However, in the 1991 version of ERS the government wants a 'maximum devolution of power to the community or individual institution'. The democratic movement, on the other hand, believes that this is a means by which the government can ensure that white communities with good schools maintain maximum control over these schools.

Although they see the need for democratic participation at the local community and school level, the ANC and NECC want the central state to retain the power to make key policy decisions and direct resources to those areas which it sees as being most in need in order to redress past injustices and bring about greater equality.

It is interesting to note that both the state and the democratic movement are in favour of community power at school level. Two points need to be made about this. Firstly, the state's conception of 'community' includes mainly parents and excludes teachers and students – two essential constituencies of the Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) which are supported by the democratic movement, particularly the NECC. Secondly, the state distinguishes between state and state-aided schools, and its view of community or parental control is tied to this. According to the 1991 version of ERS, state-aided schools should have greater management autonomy and this should go along with greater financial responsibility. What this means is that greater parental control will be given to those schools where the parents can afford to pay high fees. Thus 'com-

munity control' is really control for the wealthier communities which do not rely exclusively on a state subsidy.

There are also differences between the state and the democratic movement on what powers the regions should hold over education. The government and its allies, in particular Inkatha, would like to see decisive policy-making powers held at the regional level, with regional education departments primarily responsible to regional governments rather than to the national government. This is in line with their political aim of federalism and their desire for a weak central government. The ANC, on the other hand, wants to see much more power located at the central government level for the reasons already indicated, as well as at the local/district level where it will be far more susceptible to supervision and regulation by communities and people at grassroots level.

This does not mean that the ANC does not see any place for a regional level of educational management. The ANC's preference is for the regions to have a strong administrative role while the main policy-making powers are located at national level. Such policy-making powers would include, for example, power to determine the structure of curriculum, and what types of schools should exist. They would also include the allocation of educational funding to regions and ensuring that historically rooted inequalities and injustices are redressed.

Democratic Control

The problem of regional level restructuring is not simply that of allocating powers to regional education departments, but also ensuring there is some level of democratic control over them.

The democratic movement would want to ensure that the new education departments (both regional and national) are not merely a bureaucratic combination of the present education departments. This is the aim, at the regional level, of the restructuring exercise that was carried out by the Natal Education Board and which resulted in the proposals contained in the Report of the Natal-KwaZulu Working Group 1992 (see above). A similar aim can be attributed to Piet Marais, appointed as Minister of Education Co-ordination in April 1993, to oversee the biggest exercise in unilateral restructuring so far – combining the various apartheid education departments into one.

Such arrangements, unless checked by the NETF, would change the form but not the substance of the education management system, resulting in few changes in personnel or management culture. It would therefore constitute a

neo-apartheid education system, not a post-apartheid one. The challenge for the democratic movement is to ensure that any new education department reflects democratic interests and does not simply become a vehicle by which to preserve the old order under a democratically elected government.

Several options have been suggested – notably by the NEPI Governance and Administration Research Group and the Natal Education Policy Unit. Suffice it to say here that, in a democratic system, a tension will exist between two democratic imperatives: on the one hand, the need for the direct participation of mass organisations (e.g. the NECC and organisations representing labour, business, teachers, students, etc.) in policy formulation, and on the other hand, the responsibility of a democratically elected government to determine policy. Means of balancing these two *must* be found: for example, the establishment of advisory forums at all levels which must be consulted before any significant policy decisions are taken, and the establishment of democratic and strong organisations of school-level governance, such as PTSAs or Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs).

THE WAY AHEAD

The debates about restructuring the education system will continue into the foreseeable future. Increasingly, they will take place through common forums like the NETF; but they will be occurring in a different context to that which has existed in the past.

From October 1993 until April 1994 some of the functions of government in South Africa will effectively be supervised by the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) and from April 1994 onwards the country will be governed by an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). In these institutions, the ANC and the NP, along with other organisations, will have to co-operate in formulating policy. In the IGNU stage, the party with the most parliamentary seats will have the largest influence. But unless it has an overwhelming majority, it will be forced to contend with the views of its opponents.

It is in this context that the NETF will be operating. The NETF is essentially an advisory body that does not have the capacity to adopt policy on behalf of the government or to implement policy. Its influence will be felt in that the government of the day will be an important participant in the NETF and will commit itself to implementing decisions that are mutually agreed upon.

Even if the ANC wins the election and becomes the dominant force in the

government, it will be constrained by its partners in government. It will, however, also be constrained by the fact that the same personnel who staffed the old apartheid bureaucracy will probably still dominate the civil service for some years.

This highlights the need for continued popular mobilisation and involvement, perhaps even militant involvement, in the policy-making process and particularly, in ensuring that government policy is actually properly implemented by the bureaucracy.

In order to ensure effective involvement in policy development, and effective monitoring of policy implementation by the bureaucracy, grassroots organisations will need to be well organised. Organisations will need skills of policy analysis; they will need rapid and reliable knowledge of developments in the schools and in the education departments; their membership will have to be kept continually in touch with developments and helped to deepen their understanding of the issues involved. Only in this way will organisations be able to mobilise their resources and their members to ensure that the education system is restructured to serve the interests of the majority of people and not just those of a new, non-racial elite.

The Participation of Students in Democratic School Governance

SIBUSISO SITHOLE

1995

In 1995, the Minister of Education in South Africa's democratic government, established a Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools. This Committee commissioned Sithole to write a discussion paper on the participation of students in democratic school governance. In so doing, Sithole traces some experiences of student participation, nationally and internationally, and argues that secondary school learners should be represented on governing bodies. This paper, written in July 1995, predates the South African Schools Act of 1996. Indeed, it can be argued that this is one of the papers that informed the drafters of this legislation concerning the participation of secondary school learners.

INTRODUCTION

Is there a role for secondary students to participate in school governance and if so, over which issues? Although the notion of democratic school governance in South Africa is the product of the struggles waged by students against apartheid education (Christie, 1991), the participation of students in school governance is still replete with tension and controversy. Further, although it is the stated policy of the National Ministry of Education that students at secondary level, for the purpose of school governance, constitute one of the main stakeholders, how students are going to participate in school governance and over which issues, is yet unresolved (DoE, 1995). The development of concrete policies on the participation of secondary students in school governance is urgently required. This is even more urgent, in view of the fact that school governance is one of the important terms of reference of the Review Committee on School Ownership, Governance and Finance, established by the National Ministry of Education.

This paper is divided into different sections. Section 1 attempts to identify existing forms of student participation in school governance, and how these have impacted on the learning and teaching environment in South Africa. Section 2 provides a critical analysis of how different political and educational forces perceive the participation of students in school governance. Section 3 looks at international experiences and trends, and possible lessons for South Africa. Section 4 analyses the weaknesses and proposes reasons for a policy of unconditional participation. The concluding section deals with practical steps that must be undertaken to implement this policy.

An Assessment of Current Practices

The role of students in school governance differs from area to area, and between and within rural and urban areas. This is complicated by the fact that different ex-departments of education, and particularly principals, did not encourage democratic participation in school governance. As a result, not only were students and teachers excluded from participation in school governance, but even the parents were marginally involved, either as rubber stamps of decisions unilaterally taken by the principals or as conveyor belts for certain groups of powerful parents or political organisations with their own agendas. It is important to note however, that the issue of democratic school governance, and especially the role of students in school governance, has always been the epicentre of the struggle for educational transformation throughout the country (O'Connell, 1991). Before an assessment of current roles of students in school governance is given, it is apt to begin by looking at students' government in the schools and how students have been effective in their own governance structures.

Generally, the students established democratically elected Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) as organs of student government and power.[1] Through the SRCs students not only challenged the education departments and withstood the repressive apparatuses and strategies of the former apartheid state, but they also questioned the prerogatives of principals and parents to take decisions without consulting them and challenged their traditional views on schooling. Students were also able to amass power, which made them a formidable force in society and in the educational arena.

1 See 'Each One Taught One' in *New Era*, August 1989, 16–20, in which the 10th anniversary of COSAS was highlighted through interviews with three former presidents.

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The operation of SRCs is uneven throughout the country. Some SRCs function effectively and others are completely ineffective. This is dependent on how a particular SRC was established. Evidence in most schools with democratically elected SRCs, which were established with the full approval and support of parents, the principals and teachers, reveals that the relationship between the principals, parents, teachers and students, is qualitatively improved.[2] This is translated into high levels of improvement in learning outcomes, because of a general improvement in students' discipline as well as an increase in the time spent on learning tasks. The spirit of co-operation and mutual respect is also enhanced. Even the level of students' participation in extra-curricular activities like sports and culture and school-community outreach projects, improves. Through SRCs students are consulted on all major policy issues dealing with the organisation and management of schools.

There are also cases which indicate the contrary – that some SRCs have contributed to the chaotic situation existing in the African schools in particular.[3] There are many reasons for this state of affairs, and the following are very common: firstly, these are SRCs which have been established more often than not without the blessing of principals, parents and teachers, and in a hostile and confrontational school environment. If there is some discontent among students on particular issues, students believe that the only recourse to improve their situation is by employing force and other disruptive strategies, because they have no avenue through which to channel their grievances properly and amicably. Secondly, this hostile and confrontational school environment not only embitters the relationship of the different stakeholders, but also impinges on the ability of members of SRCs to seek guidance from other role-players on how to operate effectively, as most of these SRCs have no constitution to clarify the roles and powers of their respective members. Thirdly, the general trend is that those who are elected to serve in those SRCs are not elected on the basis of their leadership credentials, but on whether they are brave enough to face the onslaught of parents, principals and teachers. Consequently, schools with such SRCs experience unprecedented levels of disruption and conflict, which nega-

2 Interview with Mr Agrippa Msomi, a former SRC president at Mzuvele High School, KwaMashu, 4 July 1995.

3 In an interview with Mr S'dumo Magwaza, a KwaZulu-Natal COSAS organiser, 5 July 1995, it transpired that some SRCs took over the control of school management by chasing principals away, and frequently called for meetings which disrupted teaching time.

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tively impact on the performance of students in all facets of school life: sports, culture and academically.

In other schools no SRCs are allowed; instead the prefect system is operational, whereby the principal normally appoints the prefects. Students react differently to this type of arrangement. In some schools this is accepted, but in most, prefects are rejected as being lackeys of the principals. However, in both instances the influence of students on school policy decisions is severely limited.

Apart from involvement in the SRCs, students have always regarded their representation in school governance as a crucial element of the complete overhaul and democratisation of the schooling system.[4] Firstly, there is scepticism among students that, regardless of what input they give on school policies, their views will be ignored if they are not part of school governance through their SRCs. Secondly, there is a broader concern that unless decisions on school policies are democratically arrived at by all stakeholders, principals would dominate parents and thus inhibit the process of democratisation of schooling. Thirdly, some students see school governing bodies from which students are excluded as an 'unholy adult alliance' (EPU, 1993). They believe that most adults are reactionary and want to subject students to the same kind of practices they themselves went through during their school days, forgetting that the dynamics and contexts of schooling in their day were different. Students also criticise adults for harbouring inflexible and predetermined ideas that young people are generally irresponsible. It is for these reasons that, in addition to campaigning for democratically elected SRCs, students have fought for the establishment of democratic school governance structures, such as Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs), as a high point of cooperation between parents, teachers, students and the broader community.

Members of the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) have assessed the role of students in the PTSAs as highly positive.[5] Schools with effective PTSAs have witnessed a phenomenal shift in terms of the negative perceptions that the different parties held about each other. All of them feel that they have a common interest in ensuring that they promote the image of their

4 Interview with Mr Delani Shabane, a former Regional COSAS organiser, 4 July 1995.

5 Interview with Mr Mkhize, Chairperson of the Clermont Education Co-ordinating Committee, 3 July 1995.

schools by doing away with unnecessary conflicts; improving the learning environment; subjecting everyone to a code of conduct that is implemented in a manner consistent with collective agreements; setting school policies in a democratic, transparent and accountable manner; and developing mechanisms for involving the community in the affairs of the school, for example, the maintenance and security of school property.

Of course there are instances where PTSAs have been weak, but this cannot be attributed to the fact that students are involved. The main reason for this is that many parents, teachers and students lack the necessary capacity and training to participate effectively in the development of school policies, although they have the will, determination and the commitment to do so (EPU, 1993). The other important reason is that these structures operated outside the legal framework of the former education departments and were not officially recognised.

A lesson that can be learned from an assessment of current practices is that there are both negative and positive experiences of the role of students in democratic school governance, therefore policies must be formulated on the basis of existing strengths and by addressing some of the glaring weaknesses.

The Role of Students in School Governance: How is it Perceived?

The role of students in school governance is fraught with tensions and contradictions. There are at least four contending viewpoints on how the different educational and political interest groups in South Africa perceive and articulate the participation of students in school governance. These viewpoints are discussed below.

The first viewpoint dismisses the idea that students should have a role in school governance as an absurdity of the first order.[6] According to this view, students must passively receive instructions and behave themselves in accordance with the instructions of their parents, principals and teachers. The general involvement of students in politics, and specifically in protest against apartheid

6 The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is the chief advocate of this view. Under the former KwaZulu Department of Education & Culture, PTAs and SRCs were banned. Similarly students' organisations other than the IFP Youth Brigade could not operate in the schools. See also Dr Oscar Dhlomo, Minister: Department of Education & Culture, Policy speeches 1986 and 1987: KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.

education, is rejected. It alleges that students were manipulated and used as cannon fodder by misguided revolutionaries to realise the dubious ambitions of making the country ungovernable. Consequently, this view concludes that most students dropped out of school and are now criminals precisely because it was wrong from the beginning to involve students in politics. Further, it suggests that decisions about education are a matter for elderly people and must be attended to by parents, principals and teachers, whilst students concentrate on their studies. It questions why students want to involve themselves in school governance when, in fact, it is their parents who pay for their education. It also states that on cultural and traditional grounds, elderly people do not discuss important matters in the presence of children, and to do so now would tarnish the respect which children must accord their elders, and bring about decay and morass in the traditional value system.

The second viewpoint, which closely resembles the first one, accepts that students played an important role in the liberation struggle in this country. However, it contends that this must be understood in the context that South Africa was at war at the time – an abnormal situation – and students became involved in the struggle as part of that abnormality. According to the proponents of this argument, South Africa has reached a major period of political stability and normalisation, therefore students should be encouraged to concentrate on their studies and other extra-curricular activities with no overtly political overtones for the sake of improving the culture of learning.[7] In terms of this viewpoint students should not be involved in school governance.

The third viewpoint is premised on the notion that students do have a role to play in school governance, but this should be circumscribed. It argues that there are matters in which the participation of students in school governance will be undesirable (See DNE, 1992:80; Nicholls, 1992:12; KwaZulu-Natal Heads of Education, 1994:67). Examples cited are those involving the discipline of teachers for misdemeanours, and professional issues in which the judgement of teachers and principals, it is contended, is unquestionable.

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7 This view is usually put forward by people who argue that there is a dire need to depoliticise education in South Africa in order to stabilise education, especially in African schools. A false dichotomy is created between the process of inculcating the culture of learning in schools and the process of democratising schools, as if these processes are mutually exclusive.

The fourth point of view argues that students are one of the most indispensable components of democratic school governance at secondary level.[8] This view is posited on the fact that South African students, especially at secondary level, have an indelible track record as an agent of social change, and played a decisive role in the general struggle for democracy and socio-economic transformation in South Africa, particularly in the struggle for educational transformation. It is argued that the very notion of democratic school governance is the product of the students' struggles. It maintains that in the present political conjuncture, which is characterised by contestation between the conservative and reactionary element of society on one hand, and the more forward looking sector on the other, the role of students in deepening democracy and ensuring that the culture of democracy is nurtured and developed in school governance cannot suddenly be marginalised or put in the background. Further, it states that this is the most opportune and critical time to incorporate students in all deliberations about schooling. This view sees education as a site of struggle, in which different societal forces try to gain ascendancy of their ideas about the nature, form and content of the educational process. According to this perspective, students should unconditionally play a role in school governance to influence the direction and content of educational transformation at all levels. Major education policy pronouncements from the proponents of this viewpoint explicitly state that the governance structures of all schools at secondary level must include elected representatives of parents, teachers and students (ANC, 1994A; ANC, 1994B; NEPI, 1992).

International Experiences and Lessons for South Africa

Internationally, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on the participation of students in school governance as part of the process of democratising schools and the learning environment (see Gutmann, 1987; Darling, 1992). According to Darling:

8 This view traces its history from the formation of the NECC in 1986 when the organisation of parents, teachers and students into a PTSA was seen as a central pillar of People's Education for People's Power. It is shared by most organisations of the democratic movement – the ANC, COSATU, NECC, COSAS etc. and also by all organisations that constituted the National Education Conference of March 1992.

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> the call for more democratic schools has been interpreted as a demand for greater parent power; and this has effectively operated as a distraction from any consideration of the merits and benefits of legitimate pupil power (1992:45).

However, there are international experiences where students participate in school governance alongside other stakeholders – what Deem (1994) refers to as 'lay people'. These experiences are discussed below:

Canada, Ontario

In Canada, Ontario, a commission was recently established by the Ministry of Education and Training, which recommended that parents and students be given more responsibility and an active role in the education programmes and services within their local community.[9] As part of this recommendation, school councils are being established to advise the principals on school policy issues such as, for example: curriculum and programme goals and priorities; school budget priorities; school development priorities; and a review of school board policies at the local level. It is now obligatory for students at secondary level to elect their representative; whilst participation of students at the elementary level is at the discretion of the principals (see Fleming and Clarke, 1995:13).

These reforms in Canada, and specifically in Ontario, are taking place in the context of a quest to review the direction of elementary and secondary education to ensure that the Ontario youth are well prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. They must also be understood in relation to the wider policy framework of education and school restructuring, which encompasses, amongst others, changing power relations among players involved in the educational process (Smith et al, 1995:1).

United Kingdom

Since the late 1960s, the National Union of School Students has campaigned vigorously for the promotion of greater democracy inside schools, eventually leading to school committees of teachers, students, parents, non-academic staff and representatives of the local community controlling the schools and organising curricula (Locke, 1974). The Thatcherist trend in the 1980s gave rise to

9 See Policy/Programme Memorandum No. 122 issued by the Ontario Deputy Minister of Education and Training, 1993.

many educational reforms aimed at more responsibility for school governors (Johnson, 1992). According to Kogan et al (1984), pupil governors with equal rights to other governors are allowed as long as they are 18 years old.[10] There are no reasons given for this age restriction. It can only be assumed that this arises out of the English obsession with distinctions between a minor and a major although this is not a plausible reason because governing bodies have a corporate legal identity, where individual governors cannot be held legally liable for any affairs of the governing body unless acting in bad faith.

It suffices to say that this form of student participation is severely limited. It is an intermittent or spasmodic participation and does not allow for continuity. Firstly, if in a given year there are no students who are 18 years or over, students will not be involved in school governance at all. Secondly, students who are 18 years or over are in a stage of preparing for post-school life and would pay little attention to school governance issues or any matter other than their studies. Thirdly, it does not allow for the possibility of passing on and sharing experiences with other students to gain insight into the working of school governance, so as to improve the effective participation of school governors. As a consequence of this limitation, students have not taken their role in school governance seriously. Kogan et al (1984:101) observed that students 'seemed to interpret their role as a low-status pupil observer, despite their nominal equal rights with other governors'.

The education reform process in the UK has to be understood in the context of the rise of the New Right, where education, like all other public services and goods, was commodified and subjected to free market forces. At the same time, there was an attempt to wrest power away from Local Education Authorities (LEAs) by the strong central government, which would control all major financial and curriculum decisions (Deem, 1994; Willms, 1992:15).

New Zealand

In New Zealand the Picot Taskforce to Review Education Administration of 1987, proposed that all institutions should have a board of trustees to reflect the partnership between the professionals and the community served. Its composi-

10 In *The School Governors: A Guide to the Law* (1993), published by the Department for Education, it is stated that 'Governors must be 18 or over at the date they are elected or appointed. Pupils can be governors but few are likely to qualify'.

tion was to be as follows: a permanent majority of elected parents, the principal, a representative of staff, and for all post-primary institutions, a student representative (MacPherson, 1989).

This reform process, like that of the UK, also allowed communities to take part in school decision-making processes, but the main power over school funding and curriculum was in the hands of the strong central government. Another point to be noted is that this arrangement was also an attempt to subject education to the free market forces.

Australia – State of Victoria

During 1982 when the labour government took power in the state of Victoria, it sought to ensure the development of education policies and structures of participatory, democratic, collaborative and constructive decision-making. Parents, teachers, students, principals, administrators and others involved in education were entrusted with the rights and collective responsibility on educational issues at all levels: school, regional and state level (Watkins, 1991).

As a result of this development, principals had a dual function. Firstly, they became transformative leaders, facilitators and experts in examining issues and resolving problems of students, teachers, parents and members of the school councils through collaborative decision-making. Secondly, principals had to train all members to understand basic facts about the school and other complex details pertaining to school policy, so that when decisions were made, all role-players would contribute effectively.

Another development is that in advertising for and employing new teachers, amongst other requirements would be one that the applicant have a strong and demonstrated commitment to a democratic and collaborative decision-making process involving parents, staff and students (see Watkins, 1991:32).

Though there were tensions in terms of how principals were selected, with women feeling that they were prejudiced by the new selection requirement, and some traditionalist principals feeling uncomfortable with their new role as transformative principals, these developments are very important in the South African context, where principals are used to authoritarian and bureaucratic leadership styles and lack communicative skills (Hoberg, 1993).

Spain – region of Catalunya

The 1978 post-Franco constitution of Spain entrenches the rights of teachers, parents and students to participate in the control and management of public schools (Deem, 1994). This had led to a situation where, in Catalunya, an autonomous region of Spain, school councils consisting of parents, pupils (aged over 12), staff, the head and representatives of the municipal authority, were established.

The Spanish situation emerged against a background of bitter conflict against the Franco dictatorship. Educational reforms which were introduced were part of the whole process of democratising the state and all public institutions – democracy undiluted by free market forces, as noted in some of the case studies above. The Spanish example is of significance to South Africa, especially taking into account that South Africa has also emerged with a terrible legacy of repression and bitter conflict, and the transformation of the education process is located in the broader framework of transforming the state, society and all public institutions.

Mozambique

In the post-colonial period, under the leadership of FRELIMO, schools became the monopoly of the state. The new government sought to revolutionise the internal day-to-day functioning of the schools within the perspective of building socialism. According to Johnston:

> Schools were to be collective, democratic, productive, political, and 'outward-looking', in the sense of finding their *raison d'être* in serving the community and the masses (Johnston, 1989:101).

School councils were established consisting of school workers: pupils, teachers and ground staff, presided over by the GD (Dynamising Group), responsible for mass mobilisation and organisation, and the Management Commission, who were in charge of pedagogical issues, sports and culture, and so on.[11] The post of school director (principal) was abolished.

It is difficult to assess the strengths of the Mozambican experience because of internecine strife that ravaged the country for almost two decades. However, this case study illustrates that the democratisation of school governance takes

11 The term 'school workers' reflects the socialist basis of school organisation in Mozambique, where everyone is identified as a worker.

place in different political, social, historical and cultural contexts, just as in South Africa, democratic school governance arose in the context of a call for 'People's Education for People's Power' (Sisulu, 1986; Sithole, 1994).

Namibia

Decolonisation in Namibia and the process of educational reform also placed the need for consultation and participation of all stakeholders firmly in the decision-making process. This is epitomised in a statement made by the Namibian President, Dr Sam Nujoma, at the Etosha Conference in 1991:

> It is my firm belief that no true reform in education, or in any other area for that matter, can take place without full participation of everyone at grassroots level within the educational communities throughout Namibia (Snyder, 1991).

As part of this commitment, Namibia has gone out of its way to institutionalise the popular participation of the people in education. According to Ellis (1992), at secondary level school boards consisting of elected representatives of parents, teachers and students in equal numbers have been established.

Democratisation of the education process in Namibia was a fundamental departure from the imposition of decisions on the Namibian people by successive colonial and settler regimes (see Cohen, 1994). It is also a tribute to the students of Namibia who, under the banner of the Namibian National Students' Organisation (NANSO), played a pivotal role in forging unity among parents, students, teachers and the community in the struggle against 'Bantu' education.

South Africans have, ahead of them, the difficult task of reconstructing the education system, taking into account the different political and educational priorities of the present Government of National Unity (GNU) and some lessons can be learned from the above case studies. The most important point to emphasise is that there is an opportunity to design a new system of educational governance, that takes into account the unique context in which the issue of the participation of students has been developed and practised in South Africa, as well as developing policies that seek to democratise schooling as a whole.

Policy for Student Participation in School Governance

Above, four contending perceptions on how different educational and political forces in South Africa articulate and conceptualise the participation of students

in school governance were dealt with. In developing a concrete policy on this issue, this paper will focus on two of these positions. These are:

a) unconditional participation of students in school governance

b) limited participation

Two main reasons justify this shift. Firstly, the arguments against the participation of students in school governance reflect the undemocratic and static thinking of the old apartheid order and are at variance with the present framework of participatory democracy, transparency, accountability, and people-driven and people-centred development, as encapsulated in the principles of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Secondly, the White Paper on Education and Training has partly resolved the issue of student participation where it states that:

> In secondary schools, the main stakeholders for purposes of school governance comprise parents, teachers and students (DoE, 1995:70).

Thus, this paper seeks to develop a policy that aims to strengthen rather than weaken the position of the White Paper, which reflects the current policy of the GNU. Therefore, the main question that needs to be answered is whether the participation of students should be unconditional or restricted?

To address this question, it is imperative to distinguish between school governance as opposed to school management. This distinction is crucial because what seems to be at the heart of the debate between conditional and unconditional participation of students in school governance is the blurring of the distinction between the two concepts.

School governance and school management

The concepts of school governance and school management are often used interchangeably to refer to one and the same thing.[12] This is erroneous and has led to a failure to understand and appreciate the differences between the two concepts and how they are interrelated and interdependent. The ANC cautions against the arbitrary use of the two concepts and argues that:

12 For example, the Education Renewal Strategy proposes the formation of 'management councils' as a means of involving the community in school affairs. It also proposes that the degree of 'management autonomy' will determine the extent of funding by the state (DNE, 1992:79–80).

> Democratic participation in school governance must be distinguished from the responsibilities for the management and administration of the school which are vested in the school principals (ANC, 1994A:26).

In this paper, school governance refers to the institutional structure that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policy on a range of issues, for example: the mission and ethos of the school; school uniform and colours; budgetary and development priorities; code of conduct for students, staff and parents; broad goals on educational quality that the school should strive to achieve; school-community relations; curriculum programme development; and so on. The parties who constitute the school governance structure at the secondary level could include, amongst others: parents, teachers, non-academic staff, the principal (in an *ex-officio* capacity), students and community representatives. These parties usually represent the interests of the different stakeholders or role-players and are elected to represent these interests.

On the other hand, school management is responsible for the management of the day-to-day administrative and instructional functions of the school by ensuring effective teaching and learning, and the efficient use of the school's human and material resources. It operationalises and implements school policy as formulated and adopted by the school governance structure. The principal, deputies and heads of department constitute the school management team, and all of them are either employed by the Department of Education or the school itself. The principal is the head of school management and is assisted and supported in his/her functions by the senior officials of the education department at circuit or district level.

Although teachers, students and other non-academic staff are not involved in school management, one would expect that they should be consulted on at least every major decision taken by the management team to ensure that:

a) The school allows everyone to communicate freely along horizontal and vertical levels
b) Whatever management plan and policy is put in place carries the support of all involved, for it to be effectively and efficiently implemented.

For this to happen, the management team must hold periodic meetings with the teachers and SRC and call school assemblies where necessary. Despite this distinction, school governance and school management are interrelated, interdependent concepts in the following ways:

- School management accounts for its activities to the school governance body

in terms of the operationalisation and implementation of school policy, and the latter has to provide maximum support for the former to perform with optimal effect.

- The key interest that is in the forefront of the decisions made by both the school governance body and school management is the betterment of the students' education. Whatever school policies are formulated, adopted and implemented, the test for their relevance is whether, in the final analysis, they will:
  i) Create a conducive learning environment;
  ii) Ensure the adequate supply and efficient utilisation of learning resources;
  iii) Lead to the improvement of qualitative educational outcomes so that the student will derive maximum benefit.
- Poor school governance has negative implications for the school and the education of its students as a whole, and the converse is also true in respect of poor school management. In other words, it is in the best interests of all the members of the school community to have a school that is both well governed and well managed.

Democratic school governance

Linked to the distinction between school governance and school management, an issue that also warrants clarification is what is 'democratic' school governance? It is necessary to define democratic school governance so that when the issue of conditional or unconditional participation of students in school governance is discussed, this discussion will be located in the correct context. Democratic school governance emphasises that decisions must be made on the basis of consultation, collaboration, co-operation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community. Since the essence of democracy is the principle of equality, parties that constitute democratic school governance have equal status and participate on an equal footing, having the same right to deliberate on any policy issue affecting the school. In other words, these parties have democratic relationships based on equality, in which there is no place for conditionality. However, as opposed to democratic relationships, educative relationships are not relationships between equals.

Morrow (1988:252) states that 'no person can contribute to another's education unless he/she knows or understands something which the other does not'. Morrow qualifies this, however, by saying that the learner needs to be con-

ceived as an agent in his/her own right and not merely as an instrument of the teacher's agency, who uncritically imbibes all knowledge transmitted by the teacher, as if the latter has nothing to learn from the student. This distinction is relevant to the divide between school governance and school management. The parties involved in school management, as well as the teachers, have professional autonomy to decide what is taught and how, in line with provincial and national requirements. This is the domain in which parents, students and other stakeholders cannot interfere, for lack of professional competence. But their feedback suggestions could be taken into account so that learning becomes multi-dimensional rather than one-dimensional.

Educative relationships therefore, are unequal and conditional relationships, as opposed to democratic relationships, where equality and non-conditionality apply.

Conditional or unconditional participation

Those who argue for conditional participation of students in school governance, move from the premise that there are issues that are so sensitive that it is undesirable to discuss them in the presence of students. For example, it is argued that there should be a limited role for students in school governance because when a teacher or a principal is accused of misconduct, discipline must not be carried out in the presence of the students, as they will not respect that principal or teacher in the future. This argument is inconsistent with the principle of democratic school governance that is based on equality and non-conditionality.

It also fails to appreciate that where students make allegations of misconduct against a particular principal or teacher, a commission of inquiry must be established to investigate the validity of the allegations in the interest of fairness and transparency to all parties involved. During this inquiry students, as an aggrieved party, will be called upon to testify. Similarly, the principal or teacher alleged to have committed a misdemeanour would also have the right to be heard in terms of the rules of natural justice, and to be represented if she/he so wishes.

In any case, people who are affected by the inquiry in one way or another would be entitled to know the findings and appeal where necessary. Ideally, in democratic school governance, a code of conduct must be formulated and adopted by all stakeholders, and it must be implemented by a disciplinary committee constituted by representatives of parents, teachers and students, which

means that there is no single disciplinary issue which could be decided in the absence of students' representatives.

The other argument put forward is that allowing students unqualified participation in school governance will infringe on the professional autonomy of the teachers and will also interfere with the prerogatives of school management. This too, does not hold. Firstly, professional autonomy and school management fall within the domain of educative relationships, in which neither parents, students, nor any other stakeholder for that matter, are competent to interfere. Secondly, in the event that students are, in certain circumstances, given an opportunity to make suggestions on any academic and management issue for consideration by the school management team and teachers, these could be accepted, subject to the qualification that the school management team and teachers could veto those suggestions using their professional judgement.

Another argument is that, based on their immaturity, students are not competent to participate in the complex business of school management. This view is not only trivial but challengeable as well. It has its logic in the paternalistic, traditional and conservative discourse of schooling. According to Darling (1992):

> This fits in with the common-sense perception, endemic in our culture, of children as rather silly and immature, unfit to be given responsibility. Yet such a view is clearly in danger of being self-confirming: for where children are seen as silly and immature, they will not be given responsibility; and where they are not given responsibility, they are likely to remain silly and immature (Darling, 1992:55).

Darling (1992) argues that although non-implementation of the democratic principle is said to be the result of a rational review of relevant circumstances, the basic problem may be that the principle is too much of a challenge to society's fundamental assumptions about the education of the young. It is for this reason that democratic school governance must be seen as a call for fundamental changes in social relations in the school community, and a revisit of the traditional ways in which the learning process is conceptualised.

In addition, this argument is based on an assumption that principals, parents, teachers and other stakeholders have the competence and capacity to engage and make decisions about democratic school governance issues. There is incontrovertible evidence that confirms that this is far from the truth. Firstly, the EPU (1993) identified that parents lacked the basic skills and knowledge to govern

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schools effectively. Secondly, a study conducted by Hoberg (1993:160–1) revealed that the majority of principals, especially in black schools, lacked effective interpersonal communication, leadership and negotiation skills and thus were not only unable to effectively motivate parents to become involved in school affairs, but also unable to handle conflict in schools, because these skills were inadequately emphasised in the present teacher training courses. It is therefore incumbent upon all educational and political interest groups to ensure that all school governance stakeholders are empowered with the necessary skills to ensure that schools are governed and managed effectively and efficiently. Such an intervention would also ensure that, as an educational innovation, democratic school governance becomes a reality, practised and perfected through an inclusive and dynamic interaction of all stakeholders involved in the learning process.

Apart from this wide-ranging critique of conditional student participation in school governance, there is another side to the coin. Who decides that a particular issue is beyond the comprehension of students and using what criteria? Clearly, students would view any qualification of their role in school governance with suspicion because of the danger of some stakeholders arbitrarily deciding that a particular issue falls outside the role of students. Students are likely to be excluded on all legitimate issues that fall within the ambit of democratic school governance. Judging by past undemocratic, unrepresentative and authoritarian school governance structures, this could cast doubts on the legitimacy of school governance structures and their decisions. Consequently, illegitimate school governance structures would invariably undermine all initiatives and programmes geared towards inculcating the culture of learning, teaching and creating conducive learning environments by removing all potential conflicts in schools.

Unconditional participation

It is recognised that in a democratic school governance structure, all parties are equal and there is no reason to restrict the participation of students. They are there, not as junior partners, but to deliberate on all policy decisions of school governance without any conditionality attached to their participation. Whereas conditional participation is fraught with many dangers and limitations, there are many crucial political and educational imperatives that make the case for unconditional participation of secondary students in democratic school struc-

tures more compelling. An unqualified role for students in democratic school governance structures would:

- Remove suspicion and unnecessary antagonism among the different stakeholders, thus improving the credibility and legitimacy of school governance structures and their decisions by fostering greater cooperation and mutual respect between and among parents, teachers, students, principals and the broader community.
- Strengthen the unique, innovational and creative experiences of existing models of democratic school governance.
- Encourage learner-centred and interactive pedagogical approaches, because the trust, partnership and interaction that is developed in democratic school governance is likely to translate into the classroom situation as a result of changes in social relations and an adoption of new approaches to schooling and the entire learning process.
- Significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of school governance, as well as school management and, as a consequence, improve the quality of learning outcomes. This is based on the perspective that if a school is well managed and well governed this brings about a conducive learning and teaching environment, which has a direct and positive impact on students' behaviour and learning outcomes.
- Challenge the validity of the assumption that culture and traditions are static and not subject to change, and prove that to have students interacting with their parents, principals and teachers in the same forum on an equal footing is not necessarily a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it is a positive sign that is consistent with democracy and balanced changes in social relations.
- Ensure that students are afforded an unqualified opportunity to participate collectively with parents and teachers in the process of transforming our educational institutions from instruments of oppression and exploitation to nurseries of democracy, peace and justice. This is an important framework for participatory democracy and people-driven development of the RDP.
- Lead to schools becoming a fertile ground for training and building future leaders who will occupy leadership positions in all facets of life. The experience that students gain through unqualified participation in school governance will undoubtedly shape and influence their thinking and responsiveness in the future.

CONCLUSION

In making the above policy recommendation, this paper is mindful of the fact that there is an uneven political consciousness among different people in the country in terms of how the role of students in school governance is conceptualised. However, there is no justification for denying students an unconditional role in school governance. Students cannot be given partial democracy simply because there are conservative social forces that are not ready for full democracy. To withhold full democracy would pose a serious threat to the current processes of deepening and institutionalising participatory democracy as spearheaded by the GNU.

Two critical tasks need to be carried out urgently. The first is that national guidelines on how to establish democratic school governance structures must be drawn up to facilitate the establishment of these structures in all schools within a particular time frame. The second task is for different political and educational interest groups to consolidate the process of democratising all South African educational institutions by embarking on a major educational programme to educate and motivate the broader community, especially parents, about the importance of being involved in school governance, and highlight the reasons for according students unconditional participation. Such a programme could be accompanied by an ongoing training and capacity-building programme to assist the different stakeholders to effectively understand the complexities of school governance and how to formulate school policies on different issues. The following suggestions, among others, could be incorporated into such a training programme:

- Simulation games designed to develop collaborative skills in tasks such as goal setting, school development plan, school budget, etc.
- Practical exercises such as preparing agendas, chairing meetings, minute taking, meeting procedures, etc.
- Case studies of collaborative experiences in order to examine what was achieved or not achieved and why.
- Ways in which school-community relations could be enhanced, etc.
- Simplification of education legislation dealing especially with school governance.

There are immense and difficult challenges ahead, but they are by no means insurmountable. The experience that has been gained in existing PTSAs must be capitalised on to provide a catalyst for enduring partnerships between and among different members of the school community.

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Restructuring Educational Governance at Sub-National Levels in South Africa

JENNI KARLSSON, JOHN PAMPALLIS AND SIBUSISO SITHOLE

1996

During 1994 and 1995, while EPU was conducting research on decentralised educational governance, South Africa experienced considerable social change, not least of which occurred within the education sector, in particular, in schooling. The authorities at both national and provincial levels made important consultations and pronouncements concerning many of the issues central to this research. In a very real sense, political developments and events overtook our findings while several of the key questions remain unresolved and contested. This extract hones in on these questions and tries to provide some guidance to their resolution.

CENTRALISATION/DECENTRALISATION

Regardless of what is stated in Schedule 6 and Section 126 of the Interim Constitution in terms of the national and provincial legislative competencies, the centralisation/decentralisation debate on school governance will still remain a contentious issue. Any weakness in the system, be it at central, provincial, regional/district/circuit and school level, is likely to have a bearing on the entire system. Therefore, as long as the matrix of policy is properly identified and responsibilities properly outlined, strong centralisation will benefit from strong decentralisation and vice versa. This means that a call for either decentralisation or centralisation creates an unnecessary dichotomy, as if there was some 'Chinese wall' between them.

Furthermore, reasons that are put forward as an argument in favour of either centralisation or decentralisation, lend strong support to the movement beyond the 'either/or' dichotomy. This is because in practice, once the broad objectives and goals of the system have been formulated, the decision as to where differ-

cur policy and administrative functions are located should not be seen as something sacrosanct or cast in stone. It is something that should be flexible and negotiable. Thus, the problem of educational governance should be conceptualised in terms of the transference of power over specific policy functions to different levels of the system. Naturally, a proper evaluation of the capacity, experience and needs of the system at a particular time is one of the factors which will invariably determine which *modus operandi* will be best suited to the system as a whole.

The second most important reason is that a system which has as its starting point a set of core values and principles which promote democracy, a people-centred and people-driven approach to development, sustainability, accountability, stakeholder participation in decision-making, nation-building, equity, efficiency and effectiveness, would aspire to achieve the following:

- Promotion of local initiatives;
- Maintenance of coherent norms and standards across the system;
- Redistribution of policy and administrative functions to different levels according to needs and capacity;
- Promotion of a national identity which includes local flexibility;
- Equitable distribution of resources and their optimum, effective and efficient use;
- Elimination of unnecessary bureaucratic red-tape and over-centralisation/decentralisation;
- Provision of a service that balances quantitative and qualitative educational outcomes;
- An integrated planning process feeding on information/data collected at all levels of the system;
- Strong partnerships between the various levels of governance as well as between the state and the different stakeholders.

The previous system, where great power was located primarily at one particular level and within the hands of a few people, no longer exists. The form of people-centred democracy that the GNU is committed to implementing is that which permits all relevant stakeholders to participate on an on-going and daily basis in matters that affect them directly. While this participatory form of democracy must not undermine representative democratic processes and legitimate leaders, it establishes a balance of statutory power sharing at various levels through a process of consultative and advisory structures. Concerning the

provincial level of governance, several reports and legislation[1] have already detailed these and made important contributions to the introduction of such structures as (interim) forums or councils in many provinces. These documents and the implementation of interim provincial structures do not differ significantly from the broad governance proposals expressed by stakeholders during this research. Thus we do not elaborate further on the nature and composition of the provincial level of governance.

INTERMEDIARY LEVEL OF GOVERNANCE

A matter of concern is the link between the provincial statutory governance structure and school governing bodies. At least one intermediary level of governance is necessary between the provincial and institutional levels. This is supported by most of the major stakeholders and senior administrators to whom we spoke, although not many had formulated definite ideas on the nature and composition of the governance structure at the regional/district/circuit level.

This intermediary level is significant because governance structures at this level can act as important catalysts in disbanding the apartheid characteristics of our schooling system, developing an ethos that supports a culture of non-racism and nation building, while sharing and/or re-deploying resources among schools in geographic proximity to each other. Such structures would also need to interface with both the provincial consultative and advisory body, as well as the school governing bodies within their region/district/circuit boundaries. The principle that has already been established for school governing bodies, i.e. that they should comprise all relevant stakeholders, should be applied here. Thus, stakeholders are likely to include the following groups:

- School governing bodies
- Parent, teacher and student organisations
- Local government
- Education-related community organisations with a presence throughout the district
- Departmental officials (*ex-officio*)

1 See documents such as Implementation Plan for Education & Training (ANC Education Department 1994a); Proposals for the Reconstruction of Education and Training in KwaZulu-Natal (EPU/MEPU, 1994). Legislation includes the Provincial School Education Acts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

Primarily, this intermediary level of governance should have communication and liaison functions between the provincial and institutional structures and also perform district planning and development functions. The province's Department of Education will need to provide these structures and, where necessary, their sub-committees, with a secretariat and a financial allocation.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The institutional level of governance in all South Africa's schools must be transformed if we are to implement participatory democracy at a level of society where it can be experienced daily. While there was complete agreement that no stakeholder wanted to see the closure of Model C schools (almost without exception), all those interest groups that participated in this research, proposed some modification to the way in which these schools were governed and managed. These proposals were made even though it was evident that Model C governing bodies had the most developed and greatest devolution of power of all school statutory structures that were established under the former National Party government. This fact provides the GNU with useful experiential data and makes a very strong argument that this Model is not wholly desirable for widescale implementation in a democratic South Africa. Other models, such as the non-statutory Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) that were established in many African schools, should also inform public debates on this issue. Thus, this research found that there are several positive aspects in the formulation of Model C governance which can be incorporated in the democratic governance structures of schools and for which there is support among most stakeholders. Examples of decentralised school governance in other countries also indicate that there are positive outcomes to be gained, but care must be taken to ensure the participatory nature of governance so that no one stakeholder is excluded or dominated by another.

In principle, more power should be devolved to democratic school governing bodies. Our research found this principle to be unanimously supported although it should not be inferred that there is complete consensus among stakeholders. On the contrary, there are clear divisions concerning the nature of that power and which powers should reside with governing bodies and which should be retained at either provincial and/or district/local levels. If our educational objectives are to move away from the differentiation of the past and towards greater equality, it is essential that all public schools should have the

same governance system. This clearly rates the school governing body as a structure for which the national minister must establish norms and standards.

However, several predictable effects or outcomes of an acceptable and constitutional devolution of power to school level can be mentioned. There will be a decrease in the level of control of educational authorities and an enabling of the school community to exercise a sense of ownership over the institution. In addition, the relevant stakeholders will be able to make a positive and valuable contribution to the development of the whole school, for example, there will be the opportunity for innovation to occur even beyond the academic curriculum and teaching methodology, to include *inter alia*, cultural programmes, staff development programmes, fund raising, participation in school maintenance and management.

However, our findings are that despite being given certain powers and functions, not all Model C governing bodies and school management teams utilised them, for various reasons. This will certainly be true of school governing bodies as a whole in the future. Thus a flexible and 'permissive' system may be an appropriate approach, so that schools and governing bodies can find their own level of exercising their powers and functions by selecting from a 'menu' of statutory powers and functions for governing bodies. Such a menu should include user fees and fund raising, as well as management of finances because of the way in which these functions relate to an increased sense of ownership and qualitative improvements in teaching and learning resources.

COMPOSITION OF GOVERNING BODIES

The governing body should comprise representatives of the relevant stakeholders in the school. This is already the policy of the Government of National Unity (GNU) (DoE, 1995c:70) and contrasts with past structures which comprised parents and the (*ex-officio*) principal. Three distinct groups are easily identified. Firstly, parents of the learners attending the school should be represented. Within the South African context of migrant workers, rural families and single parents, it is essential to adopt a broad interpretation of the category of parents by including *de facto* guardians, such as grandparents, other relatives and neighbours who may be responsible for the learner. Secondly, the governing body should have representatives of the staff employed at the school. This category should be interpreted broadly to include administrative, technical and maintenance staff, in addition to the teaching staff.

Thirdly, at secondary schools,[2] students should have representation on the governing body. The issue of whether secondary school learners should be involved in all the governing body's decision-making is contentious. While some stakeholders may not support their participation in every discussion and decision, it is essential and necessary for student representatives to participate in decisions that they have to implement and when they are responsible for outcomes. Indeed, this involvement would be consistent with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Children. Lastly, provision must be made for the governing body to co-opt additional individuals (e.g. for their skills) or representatives of other interest groups, such as sponsors. However, such co-option should have the support of all stakeholders in the governing body.

This inclusive approach to the composition of the governing body is essential for the practice of participatory democracy and to encourage a sense of ownership and commitment to school development among all the relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, it will reduce, if not eradicate, the lack of confidence in governing bodies which some stakeholders appear to have. Some critics maintain that the inclusion of certain stakeholders, e.g. students, is a recipe for conflict in schools. However, we would argue that a tension in the balance of power could have positive outcomes such as ensuring greater accountability, transparency and involvement in the activities of the school.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The representative nature of stakeholder nominees needs to be stressed in order to ensure the level of awareness and understanding concerning the importance of accountability to the stakeholders they represent. Structured and regular mechanisms of accountability need to be developed in agreement with the full body of stakeholders so that these mechanisms meet with stakeholder expectations. Such discussions could occur during a general meeting.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The process by which representatives of stakeholders are elected onto governing bodies needs careful consideration. That used by Model C schools is mad-

2 At primary school learners are unlikely to have the capacity to participate equally with other stakeholders in the discussions and decision-making of the governing body. However, it would be desirable for these learners to be consulted when they are to be directly affected by decisions of the governing body.

equate because it was found to tap largely the motivated and committed professionals within the parent body, inevitably a small group. Although it is desirable to have skilled and experienced governors, mechanisms must be introduced into electoral procedures for the electorate to consider issues of race and gender so that poorly resourced, under-skilled and disadvantaged individuals (e.g. single mothers) will be encouraged and more willing to participate in school governance. The experiences of other developing countries such as Brazil and Papua New Guinea are important lessons in this regard. Provision of transport stipends, child care services, re-scheduling of meetings and capacity building programmes will be important forms of affirmative action to encourage greater participation. Since many groups within our society do not have experience in school governance, prior to elections it may be necessary to have a campaign to demystify governing bodies, their powers and functions, practices and procedures.

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The governing body must be involved in the development of the school so that qualitative improvements in teaching and learning can occur. This implies that, together with the department, the school community will share responsibility for the allocation and maintenance of resources at the school.

ADMISSION POLICIES

The issue of whether school governing bodies should have power over admission policy and be able to charge compulsory user fees has been overtaken by events. For example, subsequent to the interviews of this research project, at the start of the 1995 academic year schools were clearly aware that admission policies must comply with the new national Constitution and that past discriminatory practices had to cease. Admission policies in public schools are a public matter and should therefore not be a responsibility of the governing body.

ACADEMIC COMPETENCE

This is another issue that is used in the defence of exclusionary school admission policies. As with the compulsory user fees, the constitutional right of the individual to basic education must be invoked. At a public school, academic competence, unless this involves special education needs, cannot be considered as an exclusionary criterion for enrolment.

EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS

Power to employ extra teachers over and above their departmental allocation has been exercised by many Model C governing bodies. Although many of the interviewees indicated that this power was greatly valued, especially in their attempts to offset the raising of their teacher-pupil ratios, this solution is not acceptable to many if it is premised on the right to charge compulsory user fees (and implies exclusion on the basis of affordability). The employment of extra teachers by a school undermines the responsibility of the state to provide teachers in public schools. At public schools, it is desirable that all employees should have the same employer. This will avoid individual teachers having a conflict of interests in the performance of their duties and will also enable collective bargaining at an industrial relations level, which is in the interests of both the employer and employee. One possibility for overcoming such problems while still allowing schools to employ more teachers would be for the school to provide the state with the financial resources to employ extra teachers at their schools.

LANGUAGE

Determination of the language and medium of instruction should be a responsibility of the district/local governance structure, within the framework of the Constitution and the broad language policy framework of the provincial and national government. Locating this power at district/local level will enable regional planning which will take into account the demographic profile of a large geographic area, so that resources (human, financial and material) can be deployed more efficiently.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GOVERNANCE

Training programmes will be necessary to inform all stakeholder representatives of their powers and functions and to ensure that school officials do not restrict or inhibit others from exercising their powers and functions. The broad support expressed for such training during the interviews indicates that the GNU's proposal to provide some form of capacity building will be well received by all stakeholders as a useful contribution to their effectiveness as school governors.[3]

3 For more suggestions about the content of such training programmes, see Karlsson and Pampallis' paper in this volume.

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNING BODIES

Responsibility for the implementation and success of the GNU's policy of democratic governing bodies and developing their capacity to govern rests squarely on the shoulders of the departments. The Tanzanian experience regarding the importance of ensuring the professional competency and quality of their educational administrators must be remembered if school governing bodies are to be established and function successfully. (Karlsson; Lillis). To this end, the departments will need to establish a division for school governance, staffed with governance support officers. While training materials can be developed at national or provincial level, it is important for such structures to exist at regional/district/circuit level. These support officers should:

- Co-ordinate the delivery of capacity building programmes;
- Ensure the establishment of governing bodies at schools;
- Provide information and advice;
- Assist in the use of media for reporting back to constituencies;
- Act as a liaison between the governing body and the department of education;
- Ensure that accountability to stakeholders and the department (where relevant) is structured and regular;
- Act in consultation with the head of department and in accordance with departmental regulations in the event of governing body failure.

TRANSITIONAL ISSUES

There are certain to be contentious matters during a time of rapid and comprehensive transformation. These must be identified and tackled.

- The constitutional functions given to provinces in Schedule 6 of the Constitution is a mix of delegated and devolved forms of decentralised power. This provides an uneasy tension with the potential to create confusion and conflict between national and provincial levels of government, their departments of education and the stakeholders represented on their governance structures. On one hand the Constitution appears to give (i.e. devolve) decentralised power to the provinces to legislate on schooling matters, while on the other hand provinces are only lent (delegated) power on behalf of national government which retains centralised power to legislate on matters that require regulation, e.g. through norms and standards. This balance of

power may be workable among those with similar values and political objectives. However, opponents of the government will want to criticise the provinces' delegated power as being inferior and insignificant[4], while simultaneously maximising their devolved powers to legislate on educational matters which undermine the central government's attempt to establish important norms and standards in schooling.

- The traditions of schools cannot be regarded as sacrosanct and immune to the transition that is necessary for the GNU's commitment to democratise South Africa's school governance system. These traditions developed in conditions quite different to those that the new democratic state aims to create in South Africa and thus they cannot be accepted as reasons for holding back change.
- There will be attitudinal resistance to change. Those stakeholders that formerly comprised the status quo must now share power with other stakeholders in the new governing bodies. These new structures will experience teething problems. The Departments of Education (DoE) should pre-empt these by quickly establishing support structures, appointing support staff and commencing capacity building programmes as soon as possible. Clear communications regarding the governing body will avoid confusion and provide schools with an unambiguous indication of the department's direction and leadership.
- The way in which better resourced schools accommodate and provide for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and the way in which schools with a dominant Eurocentric culture accommodate learners with different cultures and interest groups must be confronted. These important and highly emotive issues should not be left solely in the hands of the school's governing body. Clear policy and practice guidelines should be developed by provincial and district level governance structures, constituting a standard affirmative action policy for all schools.
- It will take time for the Departments of Education to formulate governance regulations, establish provincial and district/local structures which can co-ordinate and assist with school governance, appoint trained staff and develop materials for capacity building programmes. This delay is unavoidable and

4 The opposition of the National Education Policy Bill and its referral by the minority parties to the Constitutional Government in December 1995, is a perfect example of this.

undesirable. In order for schools to begin to be governed democratically as soon as possible, it will be necessary for schools to be given incentives so that they take the initiative in establishing their own governing bodies as soon as the regulations are ready.

- The powers and functions of the present Model C governing bodies must be changed if the GNU is to implement its policy of democratic school governance involving all the relevant stakeholders. For this to occur in accordance with the Constitution, *bona fide* negotiations will have to take place. The power to employ teachers, charge compulsory user fees and determine the admissions policy and practice of the school will be among the primary items in such discussions. For practical reasons and to avoid unnecessary delays in the introduction of democratic governing bodies, Model C schools will need to form a single negotiating forum (at least at provincial level). It can be anticipated that those interest groups with the most to lose from such negotiations will pressure the government to enter into negotiations with each school separately.
- For an evaluation of the rate and effectiveness of the transition to democratic, non-racist and non-sexist governance in the schooling system, departments and schools need to monitor and keep statistical records of the changes occurring in student admissions, administrative and teaching staff and elected governors. This should apply to every level of governance. Criticisms that the keeping of racial and gender statistical records is discriminatory are shortsighted and narrow. It is only possible to measure and evaluate the extent to which the schooling system is being transformed and moving in the direction of the stated objectives if such data is gathered and analysed.
- Arbitration and resolution of conflict and the allocation of responsibility for taking decisions when there is a breakdown in school governance must be defined and regulated by the Minister of Education and MECs in the provinces. The complex nature of democratic school governance, involving learners, employers, employees and the community within a statutory structure that has legal status and responsibilities, is a situation with the potential to deteriorate rapidly into a crisis unless there are clear guidelines for procedures. Such precautionary measures should not, however, be the thief of the role that these democratic governance structures have to play in developing our schools and, through consensus and consultation, peacefully building a culture of learning and teaching.

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The Role of Governance Structures in the Sustainability of Learning Spaces

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1995

This paper was presented at the Learning Spaces Development in Southern Africa conference held on 27–29 September 1995 at the University of Natal, Durban.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that education authorities are responsible for school rehabilitation, maintenance and development. However, in the South African experience, the authorities have been woefully inadequate in delivering on this responsibility, and where attempts were made in the past, these were often undermined by resistance from communities who rejected the authorities of the day as illegitimate, as well as by vandalism. The result has been a breakdown in the physical infrastructure of many schools – especially in African communities. Allied to this has been a breakdown of the disciplinary processes, expectations and social relations necessary for normal learning to take place in schools, and we are now faced with a situation in which a 'culture of learning' has ceased to exist in many schools.

In the current period of social reconstruction, the need for developing this culture of learning has been prioritised by a national allocation of R100 million in 1994/95 (and R200 million earmarked for 1995/96) to the Culture of Learning Programme established by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) office. Most of this money is being spent on school rehabilitation. However, other pressing financial demands of education departments place severe limits on the money that the state can spend on such a programme and make it imperative to involve the school community in restoring and maintaining facilities as a function of the governing body.

In this paper, we consider the principle of sustainability within the new government of national unity's policy of reconstruction and development. The current context of school decay and the need for school rehabilitation is described, with an example of how one province has approached this problem by linking it to the question of democratic school governance. Several problems for the national implementation of school governance structures are identified, followed by a brief discussion of the proposed capacity building programmes.

SUSTAINABILITY, DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Linguistically, sustainability is an abstract noun that indicates the condition and quality of being sustained. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (OUP, 1982) defines the verb sustain as:

> ...to hold up, to keep from falling or sinking, esp. for prolonged periods... endure without giving way, stand, bear up against... keep going continuously...

Roget's International Thesaurus (1988) offers *strength* and *support* as suitable synonyms.

The need for sustainability refers to the tension between growth or development aspirations, and the imperative to use limited resources wisely (Muslow and Fitzgerald, 1994). This requires a long-term vision and strategic planning. In education, sustainable development is the pragmatic balance of maintaining what presently exists for teaching and learning while simultaneously enhancing it through new developments.

Within the context of schools, we interpret sustainability as pointing to the organisational mechanisms and processes by which learning spaces such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc., are maintained in a similar condition to when they were constructed, prevented from deteriorating and being vandalised or destroyed, and re-developed as and when learning and teaching needs change. It must also be noted that we use the term *learning spaces* broadly, to include the learning environment and climate, as well as the human dimensions of schooling. The mechanisms and processes must be institutionalised if they are to meet the need for long term planning.

South Africa's RDP articulates six basic principles, the first of which is dependent on the remaining five. The programme states that reconstruction and development must be (ANC, 1994a:4–7):

- Sustainable
- People-driven
- Promote peace and security
- Contribute to nation building
- Integrate reconstruction with development
- Contribute to the democratisation of society

The theme of this paper, i.e. the role of democratic governance structures in the sustainability of learning spaces, is also based on the premise that sustainability is dependent on processes being people-centred, people-driven and democratic. It is these very principles which are the hallmark of good governance. (By governance we mean policy-making decisions, and not the day-to-day administration and management of a school.)

Long-term sustainability must be a central criterion in the development of learning spaces. The existence of functioning representative governance structures helps to give effect to the sustainability of development by ensuring proper co-ordination, continuity and public support for the restructuring processes, and can also function as key performance indicators or benchmarks of efficient school governance and management (MOP, 1995:16).

THE NEED FOR SCHOOL REHABILITATION

A major problem facing the new education departments is the deterioration in the physical infrastructure of many African schools, resulting from inadequate maintenance, poor initial quality of the buildings, or destruction. In addition, large quantities of school equipment has been lost or stolen (Eastern Cape DEC, 1995; Star, 25/2/95, 26/3/95; Sunday Times, 2/11/95; Sowetan, 14/12/94; New Nation, 20/10/95, 27/1/95). Similar problems also exist in some of the (coloured) schools of the ex-House of Representatives in the Western Cape (Cape Times, 18/8/95).

Deliberate destruction or theft of school property became common in many township and rural schools during the period of anti-apartheid struggle when, as journalist Rich Mkhondo put it, 'a blow against the apartheid establishment in all its forms was a blow for freedom' (Star, 25/2/95). Criminal vandalism no doubt also played a role; now that official apartheid is over, vandalism and theft of school property continues unabated. The growth of large, informal settlements in peri-urban areas with an accompanying growth of demand for building materials has undoubtedly contributed to an increase in theft of school

materials and equipment, including doors, window panes, fencing, roofing and other materials (Visits by the authors to various schools in KwaZulu-Natal; see also Star, 25/2/95, 9/6/95; Citizen, 18/8/95; Daily Despatch, 16/3/95; New Nation, 2/12/95; Hansard, 4/5/95:255–256). Vandalism and theft have become major problems at many schools and indeed have come to exercise the minds of provincial education departments (see, for example, Eastern Cape DEC, 1995). This adds to the costs of schooling not only because of the losses involved, but also because of the added expense of providing security at schools.

In trying to address these problems the educational authorities are impeded by financial constraints which are exacerbated by the costs of addressing 'backlogs' (i.e. shortages of schools and classrooms). The national Minister of Education, Prof Sibusiso Bengu, has estimated that there are 1,8 million persons aged 6–18 years not enrolled in schools and that there is a shortage of 76 600 class rooms in South Africa (Hansard, 24/8/94:332–334).

In addition to the deterioration in the physical property of schools, many schools of the former Department of Education and Training (DET) and the homeland departments have experienced a breakdown in what has come to be known as the 'culture of learning'. Over the past two decades, as sections of the education system – particularly in those sections previously designated for the use of Africans – became arenas of conflict and dislocation, practices and habits antithetical to the learning process developed in the schools. Absenteeism, tardiness and the absence of discipline on the part of both students and teachers have become commonplace. School administration has become ineffectual in many schools, although some principals, almost miraculously, continue to run effective schools under very difficult circumstances. The culture of learning and teaching has become extremely fragile and constitutes a major obstacle to the reconstruction and development of the education system.

David Smith of the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) has conducted research in schools in the Northern Transvaal, Johannesburg and Orange-Vaal regions of the DET (Star, 31/12/94; Prof Smith has informed one of the authors telephonically that the full research report is expected to be complete at the end of 1995). He has found that:

> Ninety per cent of DET schools are characterised by the late arrival of pupils and teachers (an average of one to one-and-a-half hours a day), yearly departures, class dodging, truancy and even basking in the sun. About fifty school

days a year are lost in this way, over and above time lost through political stay-aways and mass action.

In addition, Smith's research found that many students lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills and did little in the way of independent study. Their examination papers, he says, are characterised by restricted language knowledge and a superficial acquaintance with subject knowledge.

Smith's observations regarding tardiness, absenteeism, lack of discipline and demotivation on the part of both teachers and students, correspond with the informal observations of the authors in the township and informal settlement areas of KwaZulu-Natal; this should come as no surprise to most of those with even a passing acquaintance with conditions in many schools of the DET and former homelands.

Various communities in different parts of the country have responded to the absence or deterioration of schooling facilities with their own independent efforts to help themselves (See, for example, Star, 2/1/95, 4/4/95; City Press, 8/4/95). Typically, funds are raised within the community or from donors. Tents or containers may initially be used as classrooms where there are shortages or community efforts mobilised to repair schools. Although these alternatives are temporary and inadequate, such efforts can reap considerable successes by mobilising the energies of people who are most directly affected by the problems and whose energies have seldom been utilised by educational authorities. However, a continuing struggle to obtain funding and a lack of support from the authorities can lead to demoralisation that undermines continued community initiatives. And, whatever the successes of such community efforts, the uncoordinated initiatives of communities cannot effectively address, in any sustainable way, the countrywide problems facing a large section of the school system.

SCHOOL REHABILITATION AND GOVERNANCE

Policy proposals developed by the extra-parliamentary opposition in the last few years of minority rule in South Africa and in the first year and a half of the Government of National Unity, have attempted to tackle the problems outlined above (see, for example, the 12 volumes of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report; ANC, 1994a; ANC, 1995; DoE, 1995;). One of the major thrusts of this work has been to identify the problems of school disintegration with the question of school governance.

Until recently, throughout most of the education system, all the official governance structures excluded teacher and student participation and had no real decision-making powers; what powers they had, were purely advisory. Only in the Model C schools of the ex-House of Assembly (i.e. white) schools, did governance structures have significant powers – and this has only been since 1992. These include the power to set and enforce payment of compulsory school fees and to determine and implement a school's admissions policy. This has been as much an attempt to lock in the privileges of wealthy, mainly white, communities in the run-up to the political democratisation of South Africa, as it has been an exercise in opening up school governance to democratic participation. Nonetheless, some Model C schools have reported a significant increase in parental participation since the parents were given powers over school policy and responsibility for a portion of the school's finances (EPU, 1993; DoE 1995a).

Since the mid-1980s, unofficial governance structures, known as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) – or Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) in secondary schools – had developed in opposition to apartheid education. They originated as part of the effort to develop 'peoples' education' as an alternative to the education offered to blacks by the apartheid system. The aim of the PTAs/PTSAs was for school communities to begin to control their schools, wrest a measure of control away from the state education departments, undermine what were considered illegitimate official governance structures and work towards resolving crises in the schools.

The effectiveness of the PTAs/PTSAs was variable and they often operated as little more than crisis committees. This was not an unimportant task given the situation at the time, but most, if not all, PTSAs failed to develop into stable institutions of school governance, able to contribute to the long-term development of schools. The difficulties they faced included hostility from the authorities, lack of clarity on their role, and inadequate skills and knowledge to fulfil their functions competently. Despite their problems, the PTAs/PTSAs won widespread support, especially in African communities, and the principle on which they were based (i.e. involvement of parents, teachers and – in secondary schools – students in influential school governance structures) has been adopted as government policy in the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training.

But the White Paper goes further than this. It ties the question of school governance to that of school rehabilitation (DoE, 1995b:21):

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> ...rehabilitation of schools and colleges must go hand in hand with the restoration of the ownership of these institutions to their communities through the establishment and empowerment of legitimate, representative governance bodies.

The ties between governance and the concept of sustainable development are also stressed (DoE, 1995B:22):

> The expansion of the education and training system must meet the test of sustainability. ... Unsustainable development is not development at all, but a kind of fraud practised on the people. However, sustainability is not just a financial concept. True sustainability occurs when the people concerned claim ownership of educational and training services and are continuously involved in their planning, governance and implementation.

Recently, at least one provincial government has made a start in attempting to address the breakdown of the physical infrastructure while at the same time promoting greater involvement by school communities (teachers, students and parents) in restoring a sense of pride in their schools. The School Renovation Programme in Gauteng used funding from the RDP Culture of Learning Programme to this end.

Under the School Renovation Programme, needy schools could apply for an amount of R8 000 to restore their property. In order to do this, a school had to establish a democratically-elected committee comprising the school principal and representatives of parents, teachers and students (at secondary schools). This committee had to try to involve the entire school community in drawing up a plan for submission to the Education Department. The plan needed to identify the school's priorities for repair work, and draw on all the resources that the school had, including the skills of parents and the contribution of other community bodies (Gauteng DoE, 1995; Sowetan, 3/3/95, 4/8/95; Star, 8/6/95). The R8 000 awards were due to have been allocated to about 1 000 schools by the end of August 1995 and it is obviously still too early to assess the success or otherwise of the programme.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the programme is its recognition of the link between democratic participation in school governance structures on the one hand and the rehabilitation and maintenance of the school's physical plant on the other. Instead of trying to tackle the problem of deteriorating infrastructure by the (bureaucratically easier) method of allocating resources centrally, the province has consciously decided to use the meagre resources

available to it to kick-start a process, using the energies and resources of ordinary people, to generate a sense of community ownership of the schools (Sowetan, 3/3/95). This is a recognition that although physical deterioration of school property is a major problem, it cannot be tackled in a sustainable way unless school communities become part of the decision making process at schools and begin to think of themselves as responsible for the building and maintenance of both the physical and learning environment of the school.

Similarly, it is essential to use democratic governance structures not only to build the physical infrastructure of schools, but also to transform them into learning-friendly environments by tackling attitudes to teaching and learning within each school. Of course the establishment of governance structures alone cannot achieve this. It is essential that it be accompanied by various processes such as curriculum reform, the establishment of effective teacher-education and teacher-support programmes, the upgrading of the managerial skills of school- and district-level education managers, and the provision of adequate resources, to name but some of the most vital.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to stress that, given the history of South Africa's education crisis, the establishment of legitimate and well-functioning governance structures is an essential element of any strategy to build a learning culture. The representative nature of the structures, composed of parents, teachers and students as well as co-opted (or in certain contexts, such as chiefs in tribal authority areas, *ex officio*) members of the local community, will help to give them legitimacy in the eyes of school communities still unaccustomed to regarding official structures as legitimate. Because they encompass the viewpoints of the major stakeholders, such structures will be in a position to take more informed decisions than would less representative ones. This ought to place them in a good position to act as effective conflict-resolution brokers and to defuse conflictual situations before they become exacerbated.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS FOR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Although democratic school governance structures can contribute a great deal to restoring the physical infrastructure of schools and creating a culture of learning, their mere establishment is not enough to ensure their success. There are a number of pitfalls that could lead to their failure to function properly.

Research on PTSAs shows that they often do not have the skills, knowledge

or attitudes to operate effectively (EPU, 1993: 4–9). In many poor communities, illiteracy is widespread and basic organisational skills, including the skills necessary for dealing with committee finances, are limited to a small section of the population, often small businesspeople or trade unionists. PTSA members were frequently guilty of irregular attendance of meetings – in particular when there was no crisis looming. This is often not because of apathy, but because people do not understand what needs to be done in the absence of a crisis. Large-scale capacity-building programmes are obviously necessary if governance structures are going to function properly everywhere and not only in wealthy and educated communities. The content of such programmes is discussed in more detail below.

In some areas, it is possible that school managements will not welcome the establishment of democratic governance structures. In the past (and, in all likelihood, in the present as well), there has been a widespread perception among PTSA activists that school principals were an obstacle to the formation of PTSAs because they felt threatened by them (EPU, 1993:4). If such attitudes do occur, they pose the very real threat that a conflictual rather than a co-operative relationship will develop between governance structures and the school management. Should this occur, it is likely to have an extremely detrimental, possibly destructive, effect on the school's life and any benefits of having a governance structure would be negated. It is thus important that educational departments do all in their power to promote a co-operative relationship between the two.

For the effective operation of the governance structure, it is also necessary to ensure that members are indeed representative of their constituencies. If this is not the case, it defeats the whole point of having such structures. Procedures should therefore be put in place to ensure that members remain regularly in touch with the views of their constituents and remain accountable to them.

Another danger for governance structures is that they could become arenas in which political and other non-educational differences in the community are fought out. This has the obvious potential of disrupting the school. To minimise this risk, it would be wise to try to keep the governance structures as non-partisan as possible and for them to deal only with issues that affect the school. This is not to say that they should be completely parochial; they could, indeed should, concern themselves with issues of relevance to the larger education system, which affect the school indirectly.

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES

Sustainable development of learning spaces requires sustaining institutional mechanisms, such as democratic governing bodies, which have the ability to perform and deliver in their areas of competency (Munslow and Fitzpatrick, 1994:235). However, since the majority of schools in South Africa have little experience of democratic governing bodies and the members often lack the basic expertise required for the effective functioning of such bodies, capacity building programmes are essential.

It is necessary to clarify what is meant by capacity building programmes. Basically, the aim is to build or develop the capacity or ability of people on governing bodies to perform their functions effectively and efficiently. In various documents that refer to capacity building programmes, there appear to be three essential areas of focus: accessing and using information and resources, developing skills in relation to governance functions and enhancing positive attitudes (DoE, 1995A; EPU, 1993; Metcalfe and Rule, 1992; MOP, 1995).

In its report to the Minister of Education, the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools defines capacity building as enabling communities with 'the power to act' (DoE, 1995A:97). This includes developing material resources as well as enabling our human resources with skills that are needed for effective governance and management.

Several workshops organised for PTSA activists by the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) in 1993 identified that information and skills are the areas of the most critical training needs (EPU, 1993:10). However, knowing what is involved in governing and having the skills to perform these functions is not enough for the governing body to develop the culture of learning and teaching at the school (Metcalfe and Rule, 1992:14). Unless there are positive attitudes and values among the parents, learners and teachers who make up the governing body, they will not be committed to democratic governance and neither will they be effective in performing their functions.

Below we outline some basic elements which a capacity building programme for members of governing bodies would need to cover. The outline does not attempt to be exhaustive, but merely tries to give an idea of the main elements that need to be included in the contents of such a programme. We do not deal here with methodology except to note that members of governance structures will often come to the programme with rich practical experiences that need to be utilised, and not ignored, in the design of the programme.

Information

The successful empowering of members of governing bodies, so that they perform their functions effectively, is related to how much relevant information they have and whether they are able to access informational and material resources. Governing bodies will require, *inter alia*, information about the following (EPU, 1993:10–11):

- Their constitution, and their relationship to governance structures at other (i.e. district, regional, provincial and national) levels;
- Powers, functions and rights; It will be essential to clearly define, describe and discuss these so as to provide the governing body with an unambiguous idea of their role and the expectations of school management, the community and the education department. Members of the governing body will need to be aware of the implications of their powers and functions and democratic procedures appropriate to their meetings (DoE, 1995A:98; NECC, [N.D.]:3).
- Codes of conduct, disciplinary codes and grievance procedures; governing bodies need to be aware of the extent of their powers to amend and adjust any codes laid down by authorities at a high level;
- National and provincial education policies, as they affect the school;
- Departmental funding formulae and procedures for schools;
- Legal powers which can be exercised by governing bodies;
- Education Management Information System (EMIS); training programmes will need to be linked to the provincial EMIS, so that governing bodies learn how to access information and resources that can be used in maintaining their schools (DoE, 1995A:99). They need to know the norms of the department's minimum provisioning to schools, information on the register or index of needs and other information relevant to the governance and management of schools.

Skills

Governing bodies will need to develop a wide range of skills in order to perform their functions and usefully process information about their schools, the department, as well as national and provincial education policies:

- Negotiation and inter-personal relations;
- Conflict resolution;
- Financial administration;
- Fund raising;

- Interviewing;
- Democratic meeting procedures and practices;
- Policy development;
- Strategic planning.

Some educational institutions, particularly independent schools and those of the former HoA, have experience of governing bodies. This has enabled them to develop expertise in the functions of administration, maintenance and financial management. Capacity building programmes should be structured and co-ordinated in such a way that such schools are able to share their expertise and assist neighbouring schools (DoE, 1995A:99).

Attitudes and Values

Governing bodies would be expected to observe the rights that are protected in the national constitution of the country. The practice of democratic governance would indicate a commitment to attitudes of tolerance, co-operation, consultation, transparency and accountability. It is particularly important to foster these attitudes for three reasons:

- Governing bodies are a site of localised power through which institutional policy is formulated;
- Resources within the school are distributed and allocated in accordance with institutional policy;
- Governing bodies represent the interests of various stakeholders, some of which may, from time to time, be in tension or conflict. It is essential that such tensions or conflict be institutionalised and managed in such a way that they do not lead to the disruption of schooling or the destruction of property.

It is essential that capacity building programmes for members of governing bodies be supplemented by management programmes for principals and inspectors. These departmental employees will not only require skills upgrading from time to time, but must also be prepared for the context of a new school governance system. Departments of education could prepare these programmes provincially to ensure uniformity and proper co-ordination. District or local level offices could have the responsibility for implementing the programmes, while drawing on non-governmental organisations' expertise in adult education and democratic governance (EPU, 1993:11).

CONCLUSION

The introduction of governance structures in all schools is not merely a 'politically correct' commitment to the democratisation of schools, although that has merit in itself. Rather, we see democratic governance structures as playing an essential and pragmatic role in rehabilitating school infrastructure and ensuring that a culture of learning in our schools is developed and continues to develop. Neither the technical and professional experts of the department of education, the school management committee, teachers, parents, nor students, can foster a learning-friendly school environment on their own. But by using the platform provided through the practices and processes of a democratic governing body, these stakeholders, in partnership with one another, will be able to create a learning environment that is both effective in developing our human resources and sustainable.

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Seaview Primary School classroom, Durban–1996.
Photo: Paul Weinberg.

IV THE NEW CONTEXT

The passing of legislation in 1996 for the reorganisation and funding of school level governance, ushered in the uncertain period of post-Apartheid schooling and prompted EPU (Natal) to explore related issues. With a prohibition on exclusionary admission mechanisms, urban school populations quickly desegregated and hopes were pinned on governing bodies playing a constructive role in the process of integration. In this same period EPU also considered the potential of local government to play a role in the provision of schooling that had been overlooked in previous studies. Papers in this final section are drawn from these investigations while the summative paper, commissioned for this volume, reflects on the achievement of school governance and the new context.

Racial Integration of Public Schools in South Africa: A Study of Practices, Attitudes and Trends

JORDAN NAIDOO

1996

This investigation, published in 1996, examined the process of integration from the perspective of parents, learners, teachers and principals in an attempt to highlight those attitudes and actions that might influence the process of integration in some way. Factors that facilitated or limited the process of integration were of particular interest and the study focused on similarities and differences in the ex-HoD and ex-NED schools, between primary and secondary schools, between English and Afrikaans medium schools and between schools in different areas. Here we publish an extract from the full report.

INTRODUCTION

The process of racial integration in schools up to now constitutes only the first few steps towards the total transformation of the segregated system inherited from apartheid. Although the formal barriers to discriminatory admission have been removed, the racial values and practices of many communities still remain and are reflected in the various schools. The way in which schools adapt to increased integration in the future is therefore critical for the implementation of non-racialism.

Once again, at the beginning of the 1996 school year, the opening of white, Indian and coloured schools to black children was a major issue in urban and rural areas countrywide, partly as a result of the abolition of apartheid in education. While a number of schools opened their doors unconditionally in line with national education policy as laid down by the Constitution and the White Papers, in many schools, access for black children was limited through admissions policies determined by the governing bodies of these schools, language and mathematics competency tests, increasing fees and, in some cases, by mili-

tant action on the part of right-wing, conservative parents. In some areas there was an increase in reports of racial incidents in the desegregating schools while in many others there were reports of positive integration. The wide range of experiences in terms of racial integration of public schools made it imperative to conduct a detailed study of the process.

Moreover, in addressing issues of educational transformation, the reconstituted provincial education departments have done little as yet to prepare teachers, school administrators and other stakeholders to tackle the complex dynamics involved in the racial integration of schools. Research of this nature can help to inform provincial initiatives in developing relevant policies and strategies at different levels.

With the continued demand of black learners to attend schools from which they were previously barred, the number of these learners at such schools will continue to increase and the process of integration is likely to continue to be accompanied by difficulties and challenges of various kinds, both social and academic, as more and more learners from differing academic and cultural backgrounds come together. This makes it crucial that studies of this nature are undertaken in order to understand the process of integration and to suggest strategies to facilitate the process and minimise problems, especially for greatly disadvantaged learners who are coming into these new environments.

Significance of the Research

The process of integration has aroused very emotional responses. A study of this kind is especially vital to show that objections to integration are often not based on sound educational judgements. Despite its focus on individual schools in KwaZulu-Natal, this study will throw some light on the integration process and its consequences for the school system as a whole, not only in this province but nationally.

In the context of the recently desegregating schools the question of access and exclusion has become a salient issue because any form of discrimination is outlawed by the Constitution. It is through research of this kind that marks of discrimination, both of an overt and covert nature, can be identified and exposed. Such research may enable educational practitioners, learners, parents and policy makers to identify and remedy discriminatory practices wherever they exist in schools.

By studying the experiences of schools which have desegregated to one

degree or another, it should be possible to anticipate some of the difficulties which will be faced in many schools over the next few years and to suggest certain strategies to cope with problems. A series of micro studies are necessary to feed into the policy formulation process at institutional, regional, provincial and national level. Studies dealing with the process of racial integration are especially significant in the context of the current transformation of the curriculum. This study highlights the fact that curriculum changes being suggested at a macro-level will be to no avail in addressing issues of equity if schools do not engage in certain related changes at the micro or institutional level.

Aims of the Research

Through interviews with principals, teachers, learners and parents from primary and secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, the main aim of the study is to chart the processes of the racial integration of public schools in South Africa. In describing and evaluating issues relating to racial integration in public schools, this study provides an opportunity for participants in the process to evaluate it and consider approaches, strategies, processes, and decision-making that will make a practical contribution towards an effective and relevant educational policy in their particular schools.

Arising from this all-embracing aim are the following, more specific aims, which underpin the investigation:

i) To make a *status quo* assessment of schools in South Africa with particular reference to KwaZulu-Natal;
i) To investigate the history of, and the reasons for, school desegregation in South Africa;
ii) To ascertain and analyse patterns of access and exclusion in the desegregating schools and to determine factors influencing such access or exclusion;
ii) To study the extent and patterns of integration in schools and identify the beneficiaries;
iv) To ascertain and analyse the nature and magnitude of the problems associated with integration of schools in so far as parents, learners, teachers and management are concerned;
v) To identify measures that have been introduced to cope with the problems and to assess their degree of success;
vi) To propose policy options on how racial integration of schools can be

enhanced and expedited in order to help build a truly non-racial, non-sexist and democratic system of education and training.

Scope of the Investigation

This investigation focused on the process of school integration in primary and secondary schools, both in the larger metropolitan areas and in smaller urban centres across KwaZulu-Natal. The schools serve a range of learners and local communities, with diverse ethnic and socio-economic class backgrounds. The study was restricted to ex-Natal Education Department (ex-NED) and ex-House of Delegate (ex-HoD) schools because integration is occurring primarily at these schools. There are hardly any ex-House of Representative (ex-HoR or so-called 'coloured') schools in KwaZulu-Natal and integration in them has been minimal. In the ex-Department of Education and Training (ex-DET) and ex-KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (ex-KZDEC) schools, integration has been virtually non-existent.[1]

The investigation examines the process of integration from the perspective of parents, learners, teachers and principals, with a focus on the day-to-day changes occurring at these schools. It attempts to highlight attitudes and actions of these stakeholders that may influence the process of integration in some way. In so doing, it emphasises that while structural desegregation is a one-off event, integration is an on-going process.

Factors that facilitated or limited the process of integration were of particular interest. At the same time there was an attempt to determine whether patterns in such factors existed in the different schools. The study focused on similarities and differences in the process, in the ex-HoD and ex-NED schools, between primary and secondary schools, between English and Afrikaans medium schools and between schools in different areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Circumstances and actions in the two years since the election of the government of national unity in April 1994 have paved the way for major changes in

1 The terms 'African,' 'coloured,' 'Indian' and 'white' are used in the text. These do not refer to a biological concept of race but to the political system of racial classification that underpinned apartheid education and the school populations discussed in the study. By using these terms and not combining different ethnic groups under crude general headings this study avoids losing sight of important differences in opportunity and experience.

education. Much larger intakes of African learners into previously racially exclusive schools require educators to pay urgent attention to the academic, cultural and social aspects of the curriculum in a fully integrated, non-discriminatory educational system.

Society has tried to shift the burden of desegregation to schools, which in turn have tried to shift the burden of integration to the learners. While there is much that schools can do on their own, they do require support from the community and the educational authorities.

There has to be a change from the position of ignoring race as a consideration, to actively seeking ways to integrate schools in spite of segregated neighbourhoods. A change in attitude and practice is necessary within schools for true integration to be realised.

> A diversified student population cannot be taught if the teachers have the attitude of 'business as usual'. Extraordinary planning and effort must be made to deal with the extraordinary circumstances and disparate experiences (Willie and Bekker, 1973).

The critical factor is not the nature of the change, but rather the adopter's concept of the changes he or she will have to make personally. With these changes, teachers and administrators are being asked to interact differently with one another and with the learners; hence the immediate emphasis must be on changing attitudes and then on changing practices or procedures.

Nevertheless, formal programmes can be developed at the level of the school to alter practices and procedures in order to facilitate change. However, any formal programme that is devised to facilitate integration must enable schools to develop methodologies, structures and curricula which will improve the attainment and chances of African learners now entering these schools. This will involve three main kinds of development which overlap and influence each other:

i) Curriculum development: the development of new subject matter, topics and materials and new practical classroom methods and approaches.
ii) Staff development: the development of new perspectives, skills and expectations amongst teachers as individuals, groups, departments and the whole staff.
iii) Organisational development: the development of new practices, procedures and customs and in relationships within the school and with the community (Richardson, 1992:134–135).

At most of the integrating schools, the traditional curriculum, with its middle-class, academic and 'western' oriented biases, has remained as a means of exclusion. Furthermore, it marks cultural and socio-economic difference as failure and rationalises this as individual ability. The curriculum should be more school-based and syllabi should spell out processes of learning rather than a catalogue of content. Teachers must be involved in formulating a curriculum that is relevant to the specific needs of learners. Key curriculum elements should be choice, diversity (according to individual and community needs), relevance, learner interest and community involvement. The programming of curriculum content must be the responsibility of teachers and schools. This should be complemented by specialist departmental curriculum support, in-service training courses, resource centres and incentives for the development of innovative approaches that address the needs of diverse school learner populations.

In reality, there has to be a revolution in pedagogy, in the sense of transforming all learners' experience at school, in the way the curriculum works and, in the main, in school practice (Kalantzis et al, 1990).

A fair representation of all cultural groups should prevail in all activities sponsored by the school including sports, art, drama, celebrations etc. Activities should also be selected to reflect what is customary to all groups. Even the conduct of events should be adapted to reflect learners' customs. Trying to identify measures that might level the cultural playing fields can continue endlessly, but one, in particular, is critical. As long as cultural inequality, racial division and socio-political oppression exist outside the school, learner social relations inside the school will not improve.

In order to successfully engage learners in constructing curriculum, teachers have to develop a trusting relationship with them. This takes time. Planning how to incorporate learners' ideas and how to cover prescribed curriculum also takes time, but tailoring instruction to fit learners is worth the time and effort spent. For example, a curriculum that is relevant to learners' lives is likely to be more engaging than one created solely by the classroom teacher or a publishing company. An engaging curriculum fosters learner involvement and thus increases learners' opportunities to learn. Such a curriculum also gives learners, particularly those in the margins of the dominant culture, a sense of belonging. Finally, a jointly constructed curriculum promotes understanding of others' values and beliefs which ultimately moves us towards more productive relationships with one another.

Teachers and schools need to build on, rather than tear down, what learners bring to school. That is, they need to understand cultural, linguistic, and experiential differences, as well as differences in social class, and incorporate them into the learning process. It is too easy to fall back on deficit theories and continue the practice of blaming learners and their backgrounds. Instead, schools need to focus on where they can make a difference, namely, their own instructional policies and practices (Nieto, 1994).

School change demands staff development. Faculty and administrative staff need to be properly equipped to manage the school and to ensure justice for all groups. Teachers may need in-service education to help them learn how to infuse African culture into their teaching. A multicultural setting can, at times, be very delicate. Educators must be familiar with different cultures and have high expectations for all learners. Switching from a monocultural classroom to a multicultural classroom demands intensive staff development to remove ignorance as an obstacle to change.

The demands made on teachers are high and will continue to increase if they are to work effectively in our multi-cultural and multilingual classrooms. The teachers' conventional training is unlikely to have prepared them for what is now expected of them. New skills are required of teachers in terms of language and teaching strategies. An additional challenge is that they need to develop skills to enable them to form links with parents who are quite different from the parents they have been accustomed to dealing with in the past. Teachers who are unable to relate to and understand parents from different social or cultural backgrounds can hardly be expected to create effective learning situations for the children from such backgrounds. Were teachers to develop the necessary skills, the results would certainly be beneficial for the teacher, the learner, the school, the education system and the community as a whole.

Policies relating to integration (and the accompanying racism) have revolved around three basic positions that have been limited or even largely inappropriate:

i) There is often an attempt to ignore or redefine the racial dimension of any incident or problem. The 'no problem here' attitude is predominant in the way schools respond to problems associated with integration.

ii) Responses and policies (if any) emerge informally as an *ad hoc* response to individual incidents. There has been an absence of a whole-school policy or a coherent departmental response to problems around integration.

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m) In many instances, some form of multicultural education has been championed as the strategy to solve problems relating to integration. Attempts seem to have been made to make African learners more acceptable to white and Indian learners.

Members of the different cultural groups should not have difficulty integrating, providing certain conditions are met. It is important that everyone should be equally recognised and valued. Attempts must be made to provide equal opportunities for all learners. Different groups must try to learn as much about one another as possible. Ignorance breeds fear and distrust; knowledge is a prerequisite to mutual acceptance and respect. The teacher of an integrated class must, therefore, maintain a sensitive balance between and among cultures. The degree to which any new culture is adopted should not be prescribed or required but must be adopted freely.

To provide effective education for learners from other cultures, the former 'white' or 'Indian' monocultural schools must change many basic assumptions and practices. It is obvious that a learner who has been socialised in the culture practised at a particular school has a better chance of succeeding at that school than a learner who has not been socialised in that way. Encouraging learners to socialise beyond cultural lines is no easy task. If learners are to interact naturally across cultural lines at school, the total school environment, as well as societal life, must change. We cannot expect learners to develop respect, trust and understanding of one another if they have only been integrated academically.

Socialising across learner groups can be encouraged through activities that promote school spirit. Morning assemblies, pep rallies, competitions and sports can help achieve school-wide goals and, in turn, encourage camaraderie. Cross-race contact can be further enhanced through extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs. While this aspect of school life is making a significant contribution to facilitating integration it can be used as a greater resource. Stereotyped notions still influence sporting interaction strongly. There is a need for more mixed teams in soccer, rugby and athletics and other sporting activities. Particular sports should not tend to become the domain of certain race groups, as appears to be happening at many schools. Such activities are often scheduled after school hours. In other schools teachers set aside one instructional period a week to allow learners to engage in a variety of extracurricular activities. All these programmes should be structured in such a way that they encourage maximum racial integration. Transport and other barriers that may limit the African

learners' participation in such activities should be removed.

One indicator that schools are successful at encouraging socialising across learner groups is when learners continue their associations beyond the confines of the classroom. For instance, when they have unstructured time, such as lunchtime, they choose to sit or to mingle with learners of other races with whom they have associated in classes. Perhaps a more important indicator of success, however, is whether learners choose to associate with one another outside of school hours. Camaraderie among different learners can be achieved outside the classroom through school-wide projects in the community involving educators, learners and parents. Charity drives and other community-service projects can give learners from diverse backgrounds a sense of belonging and togetherness. This is bound to build a better spirit and enhance integration within the school.

Children stand out when they are 'different' – when they are late for school, when they speak too loud because that is what they do at home, when they speak a different language or have a noticeable accent. Accordingly, this has an effect on integration in schools. Schools should not tackle these issues by attempting to homogenise learners. Difference and diversity must be recognised and given its due place within the school. In South Africa, integrated schools were launched at a time when racial and ethnic integration existed nowhere else in society. Segregation and all kinds of oppression were prevalent at all levels, socially, politically, economically, culturally and educationally. Under these conditions, one cannot blame the learners for grouping together in their own cultural groups. One cannot expect distrust, suspicion and hatred to be replaced instantly by trust and warm embraces.

Instead of being a white or Indian or African school, the school should just be a public school. All cultural groups should be represented fairly at all levels of the school community. No learners should feel overwhelmed, either inside or outside the classroom, by learners from another cultural group. Learners should be able to relate to the faculty and administrative staff and not see them as strangers. Rituals like assemblies should be adapted to reflect the practices of all cultural groups, or be abandoned altogether. Standards of learning, curricula, syllabi, textbooks, teaching methods (group work, discussions, etc.), aims and objectives, values and forms of evaluation should represent the different cultures at the school in dignified ways – ways that seek to build learners' self-confidence instead of demoralising them.

African learners attend ex-NED and ex-HoD schools for many reasons, but it is important to recognise that white and Indian South African learners do not attend so-called 'black' schools. Due to exploitation and economic oppression, 'black' schools in particular, lack vital educational facilities, equipment and teachers. White and Indian learners and their families will not easily exchange their privileged position for the impoverished situation in which the majority of African learners still find themselves. School integration in South Africa is likely to be one-way for some time to come.

Society has a social contract to educate all youngsters, not simply those from a particular racial or ethnic group, or English speakers, or the economically privileged. Yet from this study, it appears that schools continue to fail some learners, especially those from racially and culturally dominated and economically oppressed backgrounds. These schools are continuing to operate on the basis that it is their function to adapt the disadvantaged learners to school systems that are intrinsically biased against them. Despite this, African learners still travel long distances from townships to attend these historically white and Indian schools, because of a lack of school facilities in black townships. This will be a reality until townships and suburbs are racially integrated and adequate schools are available everywhere.

The way in which this study has focused on racially integrating schools may be limited, but the fact remains that under-utilised facilities in ex-white and ex-Indian areas must be maximally exploited for the benefit of all. This must be done in the context of rethinking and taking more positive action on how the needs of a plural society can be effectively addressed. In effect, there has to be a major paradigm shift in education, not merely at a macro policy level but at the level of the school. Such a shift implicates every aspect of education, from its epistemological assumptions in the minutiae of the classroom, through to systems management structures.

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Local Government Partnership with Public Schools in South Africa: Some Stakeholder Perceptions

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1997

This paper reflects one component of a broader research project concerning the role of local government in the provision of schooling conducted in 1996. The process of identifying relevant stakeholders who could be interviewed, led us to develop several categories of organisations and groups that are either involved in local government and education or who would be affected by future developments in these sectors. This led us to focus on local or provincial organisations and local or provincial representatives of a national organisation.

International experience from Great Britain, the United States, Chile, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and India provides examples of co-operation, linkages and relationships between local government and education (Tikly, 1996). Although South African educationists and local authorities lack experience in such partnerships, the transitional period of restructuring government in South Africa is opportune for considering the potential of such partnerships and investigating how the advantages can be realised. However the debate around centralisation or decentralisation of the system has focused on the national and provincial levels and has ignored the role of the local government.

In the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the African National Congress (ANC) identifies the critical importance of local government, although it does not suggest specific areas in which the scope of local government functions may be increased:

> It is the level of representative democracy closest to the people. Local government will often be involved in the allocation of resources directly affecting communities... Local authority administrations should be structured in

> such a way as to ensure maximum participation of civil society and communities in decision-making and developmental initiatives of local authorities (ANC, 1994:129–131).

Recommendations must resonate with ideas that have emerged from local level, and advocacy will depend on support from the society – or, to be more precise – the community of stakeholders. In this paper, we briefly identify and describe some of the key stakeholders who are active in local government and public schooling within South Africa's province of KwaZulu-Natal, and analyse their perceptions of, firstly, previous involvement of local government during the apartheid era and, secondly, present possibilities.

Several problems hampered our attempts to hold stakeholder interviews and gather information.

- Setting up interviews with senior officers and/or representatives was difficult, mostly because of the demands on their time or through local representatives being unavailable and failing to respond to our requests. With some stakeholders, the researcher seeking an interview was referred from one disinterested representative to another. One political party declined to be interviewed on the grounds that its position was reflected in statements made by the provincial parliament's Member of the Executive Committee (MEC), while another party questioned the value of the research topic as 'speculative'.
- Several stakeholder representatives either cancelled or did not keep their appointments.
- The relevance of the research topic was disputed. This led some stakeholders to refuse interviews or, if in progress, to abruptly discontinue them.

Despite these problems, we conducted 16 interviews. While these difficulties do not invalidate the findings, they have prevented us from presenting a more comprehensive coverage of perspectives, as we would have preferred.

Categories of Stakeholders

CATEGORY	STAKEHOLDER	
	National/Provincial Level	*Local Level*
Local Government: Ministerial	• Provincial Parliament	
Local Government: Council		• Durban North and South Central
Local Government: Manager (urban and rural)	• KwaZulu-Natal Association of Local Government Authorities	• Durban Metro • Indlown Region
Education: Manager – head office	• KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture	
Education: Manager – region level	• KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture	
Education: Manager – school level	• KwaZulu-Natal Principals Association	
Political party	• African National Congress • Democratic Party • Inkatha Freedom Party • National Party	
Teacher union/organisation	• Association of Professional Educators in KwaZulu-Natal • South African Democratic Teachers Union • Natal Teachers Union • South African School Library Association • South African Congress for Early Childhood Development	
Student organisation	• Congress of South African Students	
Parent/Civic organisation	• South African National Civics Organisation • Congress of South African Trade Unions	
Private enterprise/Business	• Inkanda Chamber of Commerce	• Durban Chamber of Commerce & Industry

The questions were formulated for a loosely structured interview and a pilot interview was conducted to check the focus of the questions. The questions

investigated the interviewee's perception of local government's role in the past, its beneficial value, the identification of positive and negative contributory factors, and the identification of opportunities and possibilities for direct and indirect ways in which local government can be involved in schooling in the future. Interviewees were asked to suggest limitations in local government's present functions and capacity which would prevent greater involvement, and what would need to be in place for local government to be more directly involved in schools. Lastly, interviewees were invited to express an opinion about whether there was political will to extend local government's present involvement in the provision of schooling.

THE FINDINGS

The perception of the historical role of local government involvement in schooling varies across the spectrum of stakeholders who were interviewed. However, in general we found a perception that in the past local government has had little or no role in schooling. Among those stakeholders who perceive that in the past local government played a role in schooling, various examples were cited: indirectly on issues such as the provision of library and museum services that contribute to schooling generally and informally through the interests and contacts of individuals in local government, and more directly in infrastructural development and the maintenance of health and safety standards, especially by rural local authority structures.

Across a majority of the stakeholders (all but four), the 'little or no role' was the view expressed. This was often qualified by pointing out exceptions, and these were considered to be either minor (in scope), routine (as for the provision of school sites) or localised (for certain racial groups during the apartheid era or levels of schooling such as early childhood development). These variations in perceptions can thus be ascribed to one or a combination of the latter factors.

Several areas of involvement emerged, either to qualify the perception that local government had 'little or no role' or to exemplify the experiences which suggest a more active role for local government.

i) *Early Childhood Development (ECD)*

Local government emerged as an active roleplayer in at least two ways:

- Funding: The local authorities built and funded the operation of some of

the care centres and pre-primary schools. This experience appears to have been common among at least two constituencies, namely the white local authorities (as distinguished by the repealed Group Areas Act) and the rural areas especially those served by the defunct Joint Services Boards (JSBs) and Regional Services Councils (RSCs). A second aspect of the funding role relates to the granting of subsidies to care centres and pre-primary schools. In order to access the subsidies available from Departments of Education, local authorities had to approve applications.

- Regulatory: Through departments for health and safety, local authorities had to ascertain that health and safety standards were met in ECD educational institutions.

ii) *Basic and Further Education Levels*

Several layers of involvement emerged.

- Regulatory: As in the case of ECD, through health and safety standards, local authorities ascertained that the physical infrastructure and environment of schools complied with basic standards. Although there are instances when this role was highly visible (such as during the cleaners' strike in Stanger schools in 1995), this role of local government was either suspended at certain times by provincial ordinances or was not acted upon in certain areas such as in African schools where conditions were often below basic standards.
- Governance: Interviewees cited two ways in which local authorities participated in school governance structures. First, formally as representatives of local authorities. This was found to occur especially in rural schools under the jurisdiction of traditional authority structures. Amakhosi were represented by induna at school governing councils. Second, the interests of local government were articulated informally through governing council members who were parents or community leaders coopted/appointed to these governing councils and who held some office in local government structures. This appears to have been common among urban schools and in some rural schools outside the jurisdiction of the Amakhosi, i.e. mostly schools serving the white community.
- Controlling and monitoring: Although not common, there is evidence of local authorities attempting to normalise school environments and restore teaching and learning, especially in areas where there was a breakdown in

social cohesion for various reasons. The control aspects of this role pose a number of problems to teachers, learners and communities.

- Provisioning: In general, local authorities provided schools with basic infrastructural services such as water, electricity and sanitation. (In urban areas this was attended by an annual rates fee which was paid by central government.) Schools in rural areas did not benefit from this provisioning role because of the lack of development and resources in those local authorities.

Our evaluation of these roles tracks the issues from two perspectives: firstly, the historical practice and rationale, and secondly, the current limitations in terms of the factors which militate against an increased role in the present (new) dispensation.

i) *Historical practice and rationale*

Where there was a perception that local government played some role in schooling, positive views were expressed by respondents. The notion of a local authority that is accessible and takes interest in local problems, although a rare phenomenon, was embraced. More commonly, however, there were reservations because former local authority structures were constituted undemocratically and their role was either *ad hoc* and informal or subject to the whims of the provincial and central government.

ii) *Present dispensation*

Respondents identified several areas that singly or collectively act against local government structures adopting an active role in the provision of schooling.

- Lack of financial provision to undertake responsibilities
- Problems of local government capacity and experience with issues of education
- Absence of a legal (constitutional) framework to provide local government with a role in the provision of schooling
- Apartheid system led to an historical imbalance in the provision of resources so that some local authorities became poorer than others and with less capacity to engage actively in community development and schooling
- Lack of political will from both central and provincial authorities to delegate functions to local government was underpinned by party political suspicions and political control of different levels of government.

Our respondents were divided (60 to 40) on the issue of whether there was political will in this new dispensation for local authority to be assigned functions that involved the provision of schooling.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR INVOLVEMENT

A key question in the investigation concerned the potential role of the newly elected local authorities in schooling. All but one of the respondents saw a need for an increased role, though the nature and extent of this differed for each stakeholder. Several reasons were advanced in support of the increased role.

- To promote local community involvement and participation in issues of schooling;
- To address the present inefficiencies in education, especially when several departments are responsible for the provision of school infrastructure. It was noted that problems and tensions often arise as a result of this arrangement.
- To achieve the social goal of a redistribution of local resources and serve as an 'equaliser of opportunities' among all the schools and learners in the locality.

It is remarkable that the only respondent who expressed the view that there was no role for local government in the provision of schooling, is politically responsible for local government in the province, i.e. the provincial parliament's MEC for Local Government and Housing. For the MEC, the issue was not limited to the lack of capacity and other problems identified above, but was based on an economic argument that there was no financial sense in involving local government in the provision of schooling.

The scope for local government engagement in schooling was explored, with some stakeholders advocating greater direct and indirect involvement. The options were not presented as mutually exclusive roles. Indeed, a combination of direct and indirect roles was often advanced by the same respondent. Suggestions for areas in which there could be greater involvement were:

- Curriculum development.
  Consensus building e.g. regarding language of learning in local schools, developing policy frameworks in ECD institutions such as care centres and pre-primary schools.
  Support for greater local government involvement in the two examples mentioned, reflects a minority view because most respondents argued that professional/academic aspects of schooling should not be within the ambit

of non-educationists such as local government. Further, we noted that among those advocating this view were senior managers within the provincial Department of Education (DoE) and representatives of teacher unions. Respondents used the term 'professional/academic' to refer to such issues as employment of teachers, development and design of curriculum including the language of learning, and the organisation of learning programmes at schools. This minority view, expressed by representatives of a business organisation and teachers' organisation as well as a senior education manager, was challenged by other stakeholders within the same categories (see Table).

- Local community needs assessments regarding schooling and education in general.
- School infrastructural development, building and maintenance.
  Local authorities have the technical and administrative capacity to deal with infrastructural development which they use for township and housing development. This could include provision of facilities used in early childhood development, such as care centres and pre-primary schools and specialised facilities for schools such as libraries and sports centres.
- Governance
  It may be beneficial for schools to have local government representatives participating directly and formally in school governing councils. A variation of this role could include participation in a consortium of such school governing bodies within a local authority district.
- Resource provisioning
  Local government is well placed to draw on their existing services to provide specialised resources, particularly for ECD institutions. This provisioning support should not restrict or inhibit the initiative of managers in these institutions. In addition, local governments' libraries and sporting facilities that are located close to schools, could be expanded and managed in such a way as to serve both the needs of the school community as well as the local community. Through such collaboration, government will limit expenditure and maximise usage of costly specialised services and facilities.
- Monitoring
  Local government may have the capacity to support departments of education by monitoring educational institutions in the ECD and Further Education phases.

- Fund raising
  Local government is well placed to facilitate the linking of local industries and enterprises with local schools. This would form a bridge between schools and the private sector, with local government providing support in the form of advice, coordination and supervision of grants. This role can be coupled to a redistributive function through which disadvantaged schools are developed.
- Primary health care
  The primary health care service in urban schools which is currently coordinated through local government can be extended. For example, in rural areas clinics could be established in or adjacent to selected schools and the local government's health workers could work with teachers on those lessons that cover learning about health.
- Advocacy
  Almost half of the stakeholder representatives referred to this as probably the most important aspect in which local government can be more involved in the provision of schooling. Respondents referred to the need for local government to lobby and exert pressure on other levels of government on behalf of local schools. This could occur through negotiations and discussions. It was felt that political pressure could best be attained through: i) organised local government forums which are represented at national discussions; ii) organised local government forums represented in the National Council of Provinces; or iii) individuals exerting pressure within their own political party structures. It was also felt that advocacy around issues concerning the state's delivery of its educational obligations, such as school health and safety standards, could also be effectively directed by local government at higher levels of government. This would require local councillors to play a more active political role at the local level.

CONCLUSION

Although the foregoing sections identify opportunities for greater involvement of local government in the provision of schooling, at present they are merely 'good ideas' on paper. Implementing and exploring these possibilities requires us to consider the limitations of the existing local government structures in South Africa, some of which have already been identified by respondents, as mentioned above.

Four broad conditions should be put in place before any increased involvement can be explored.

i) Discussion, negotiation, coordination and communication among various stakeholders in both education and local government, possibly through a forum;
ii) 'Levelling of the playing fields' in terms of the capacity and resources available to local authorities;
iii) A legislative framework to define the parameters of local government's specific functions and role with regard to schooling;
iv) Mechanisms to enable local level political accountability of local councillors and more power and authority delegated to management structures of departments of education at regional and district levels.

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Decentralisation in the new Education System: Governance and Funding of Schooling in South Africa 1992–1997

JOHN PAMPALLIS
1998

INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, the education system in South Africa was extremely complex. There were fifteen different education ministries: one for each of the ten bantustans, one for each of the four race groups (African, white, coloured and Indian) outside of the bantustans, and one responsible for the Department of National Education whose task was to set norms and standards. Despite the existence of central controls, the system was in fact a conglomeration of different sub-systems. Each department had its own school models, with each model having its own funding formula, its own relationship to the department and to parents, and its own governance arrangements. Clearly this chaotic situation needed to be rationalised, and the rationalisation had to be carried out in line with the new government's principles of promoting equity, democracy and quality in the education system.

South Africa's Interim Constitution, which came into effect in 1994, formally split control over schooling between the national and provincial governments. A national Department of Education was responsible for establishing national norms and standards, and nine provincial departments had the responsibility for managing and administering the school system and establishing policy within the national parameters. Tertiary education, excluding teacher education, was a responsibility of the national department of education – although the universities continued to enjoy substantial autonomy. The 'final' Constitution of 1996 left these arrangements essentially unchanged, except that teacher education also became a national responsibility.

In the period immediately following the 1994 election, the main task facing the provincial departments of education was the creation of a single provincial system out of the former racially and ethnically based departments that had operated in their territories. Some provinces had bits and pieces of as many as nine different departments to integrate. This devolution of power to the provinces was the first step in the desegregation of the education system.

After a long and often sharply contested process of public consultation and policy development, the government's policy for the organisation, governance and – to some extent – funding of schools was codified in the South African Schools Act of 1996.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT

The main provisions of the Act are as follows. The multiple school models of the various apartheid education departments have been replaced by two legally recognised categories of schools – public schools and independent schools. The Act also makes schooling compulsory for all children between the ages of seven and fifteen, and bans corporal punishment. It provides for the establishment of governing bodies with considerable powers (see below) at all public schools. These governing bodies must be composed of the school principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and (in secondary schools) learners; governing bodies may also have co-opted members without voting rights.

In order to deal with the heterogeneity of the school system, the Act makes it possible for the governing bodies of different schools to have different powers and functions. The Act stipulates a set of functions that are allocated to all school governing bodies. These include the following:

- Adopting a constitution and mission statement for the school;
- Administering and controlling the school's property, buildings and grounds, including renting them out for fund-raising purposes;
- Recommending to the department the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff; and
- Developing a budget for the school, which could include schools fees, for approval at a meeting of the parents. Once approved, school fees become compulsory and all parents, unless specifically granted exemption, are obliged to pay for them.

Governing bodies may apply to the provincial education department to be allo-

cated additional functions consistent with the Act and provincial law. These could include the right to:

- Maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds;
- Determine the extra-curricular activities;
- Choose the subject options offered at the school, within the parameters of provincial curriculum policy;
- Purchase textbooks and other materials and equipment;
- A 1997 amendment to the Act allows all public schools to employ teachers in addition to those allocated and paid for by the provincial departments of education, as long as the funds to pay for these additional teachers are raised by the school.

In recognition of the fact that many governing bodies, due to lack of experience or skills, may have difficulty fulfilling their basic functions or qualifying for additional functions, the Act obliges provincial governments to provide training for governing bodies.

The Act also lays down the principle that the state is obliged to fund public schools on an equitable basis 'in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and the redress of past inequalities in education provision.' However, no funding formula is established in the Act. In late 1997 the Department of Education released a 'draft national norms and standards for school funding' for public comment (Government Gazette, 3 October 1997, No. 18349).[1] The draft proposes that the neediest 40% of schools in each province should be privileged in the distribution of resources by the provincial departments of education.

Unfortunately, due to a shortage of government funds for education, even the poorest communities will be expected to contribute financially to the essential needs of their schools – for example, the cost of water, electricity and telephones. Communities which fall outside the poorest 40% but which are still poor will have to pay an even greater proportion of these costs. This burden will, of course, be greater in poor provinces such as the Northern Province than in the relatively affluent Gauteng or Western Cape.

The draft proposes an allocation for all schools of 'at least R100' per pupil to cover essential furniture (except in new schools, which will be outfitted by the government), stationery, books, educational materials, photocopying and audio-

1. At the time of writing (February 1998) the norms had not yet been finalised.

visual equipment, and repairs. However, the draft then goes on to consider the situation if the budget allocation of the provincial department is so low that spreading it equally among all schools will reduce the package to below R100. The suggested solution is to ensure that in such a case the poorest 40% should receive the R100 minimum. This implies that the national Department of Education expects that the resources available to provincial departments could be so meagre that it proposes a funding formula that will result in parents having to supply some of the basic resources required by schools. Where parents cannot afford it, this could threaten the principle of compulsory education and even children's constitutional right to a basic education.

GOVERNANCE

The first big step in the implementation of the South African Schools Act was the organisation of elections to establish governing bodies at all schools in the country. At the end of 1997 this process had been substantially completed, with the exception of two provinces that were expecting to complete elections in early 1998. There is as yet little or no published information on the functioning of governing bodies. However, it is clear that they are a very heterogeneous group. At one end of the scale are those governing bodies in the affluent suburban schools. These governing bodies are dominated by well-off and highly-skilled professionals and managers – predominantly white, but including a small but growing complement of blacks – which have accumulated a number of years of experience in running schools under the old Model C system (1992–1994). At the other end of the scale are those governing bodies in the poorest rural areas, where the parent component is largely illiterate. In between are a range of governing bodies with widely varying capacities.

The majority of governing bodies is in considerable need of the capacity-building programmes that the Act requires provincial Departments of Education to provide. They need to acquire training that will give them a wide range of knowledge and skills. These include, *inter alia*:

- Knowledge of how the education system functions;
- Knowledge of the role of governing bodies, and of their functions and rights as laid down in the law;
- Skills of conflict resolution;
- How to conduct and record meetings;
- How to keep financial records; and

- How to conduct interviews and select staff.

Some of the provinces have already begun to implement the capacity-building programmes, but it is not clear how successful they are proving to be. Gauteng has recently (late 1997 and early 1998) commissioned an evaluation of its programme, but the results of this were not known at the time of writing. However, it must be said that all provincial education departments are experiencing severe financial problems and this is likely to affect the quantity and quality of the training they can provide to governing bodies.

The powers and functions allocated to governing bodies by the South African Schools Act represents a significant decentralisation of power to the school level. Apart from those powers and functions mentioned above, the provincial education departments also delegate other important powers to the schools. The most important of these is the power to control the admission of students to the school. (The Act does, however, contain certain provisions to guard against racial or class discrimination in admissions policies.)

WHY DECENTRALISATION?

The reasons for this decentralisation are complex, and are associated with a coincidence of the interests of the two most powerful, if usually antagonistic, constituencies in the immediate post-election period: the broad democratic movement – represented in the government of national unity by the ANC – and the former white ruling class. Their interests converged in two important ways which helped to shape schools policy.

Firstly, there was fairly broad agreement between the two groups regarding the establishment of school governing bodies with considerable powers. This was the result of the convergence of two relatively recent traditions. On the one hand, the democratic movement had, since the mid-1980s, been demanding the establishment of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) as a means of getting the schools (which had been disrupted by anti-apartheid resistance) to function properly by putting them under the control of school communities. On the other hand, there was the tradition of Model C schools, introduced by the National Party government into almost the entire white state school system in 1992. Partly this was a response to the state's growing inability to provide the same level of financial support to the white schools as previously, and partly it was an attempt to ensure continued control by white local communities as opposed to the schools falling into the hands of a democratically elected gov-

ernment. These two traditions coalesced in support of the concept of powerful school governing bodies by two disparate but influential constituencies.

Secondly, both these constituencies found agreement on the right of school governing bodies to charge school fees, albeit for different reasons. The previously privileged communities wanted to ensure that they would be able to add private funds to state-provided resources for their schools, in order to ensure that the resource bases of the schools did not deteriorate in the face of the state's expected redistribution strategies. Most ANC-aligned constituencies were originally opposed to the imposition of compulsory fees by governing bodies as something that would perpetuate inequities between wealthy, mainly white, communities and poorer, black communities. However, they were eventually persuaded to accept the principle of fees, partly by the arguments of the Department of Finance that the scarce resources available to government meant there was a need to utilise private sector funding, and partly by arguments of the 'Model C lobby' that fees paid by wealthier communities would release state money for use in poorer schools. Thus, the principle of school fees, and later the idea that fees should be determined by governing bodies, was accepted by the ANC and, more reluctantly, by its allies in the teacher and student organisations.

The result was the significant decentralisation of the school system that has emerged. This decentralisation has created the potential of greater democratisation of schooling, with school communities being able to exercise control over many aspects of their schools. In particular, given the chaotic situation in many of our schools, governing bodies have an important role to play in establishing a culture of learning and teaching. Because this requires the ability to influence the habits, attitudes and behaviour of the main role-players in a school and to build co-operation between them, it is best tackled at the school level. Since these role-players are the ones who are represented on the governing body, and since they have the legitimacy of being elected, they are probably in a better position than anyone else to exercise the necessary influence to change the culture of learning and teaching in schooling. Such strategies, however, will require the support of the Department of Education and other social institutions. One of the main dangers in this regard is that the provincial Education Departments will not have the financial or human capacity to establish adequate capacity-building programmes to empower those governing bodies which need them the most.

One initiative for empowering governing bodies is a process now underway

which will establish a national association of school governing bodies. Such an organisation could provide advice and support to individual governing bodies, participate in improving capacity-building programmes, and provide a collective voice for the concerns of its member governing bodies. Since the nascent organisation is aiming its efforts primarily (although not exclusively) at organising governing bodies at previously disadvantaged schools, it will also offset the influence at national and provincial levels of the only currently-existing organisation of governing bodies which speaks mainly for wealthier and more conservative Afrikaans-language schools.

CONCLUSION

Despite its potential for democratising schools through the decentralisation of power, schools policy has serious inherent dangers for any movement towards the goal of equity. This is precisely because a partial decentralisation of school finance has been included in the process, especially since this has taken place at a time of financial constraint by the state. The designers of the schools policy and the legislators who passed the Act did not foresee the extent of the financial squeeze that education would experience. The result could well be that the poorest schools remain poor, though some may experience marginal improvements, while the formerly privileged schools actually improve their resource base through the contributions of parents. Some schools have insufficient textbooks, no toilets, broken windows and leaking roofs, while others spend large amounts to lure extra teachers, establish hi-tech resource centres and improve already well-established sports grounds. The chances of the resource gap narrowing appear slim until the state can afford to put substantially more money into education.

The irony is that the very decentralisation that has led to greater democratisation of schooling by giving all the main stakeholders a powerful voice in the schools' affairs, is also contributing to the perpetuation of inequities among our schools. The new inequalities, however, are increasingly being drawn on class rather than racial lines. Future policy development and planning will need to take this into account if the education system is to avoid moving South Africa towards an increasing and damaging social polarisation.

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EDUCATION POLICY UNIT (NATAL)
ISBN 1-86840-288-6

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